GEORGE R.

GEORGE by the Grace of God, King of *Great Britain*, *France*, and *Ireland*, Defender of the Faith &c. To all to whom theſe Preſents ſhall come Greeting. Whereas our Truſty and Well-beloved *Mary Smalridge*, Widow and Adminiſtratrix of the Right Reverend Father in God Dr. *George Smalridge*, Biſhop of *Briſtol*, and Dean of *Chriſt-Church*, in our Univerſity of *Oxford* deceaſed, has humbly repreſented unto us, that ſhe has given Directions for printing at the Theatre in *Oxford*, in one Volume, ſixty Sermons preach'd on ſeveral Occaſions by her ſaid late Husband; and that the ſole Right and Title of the ſaid Work is in her the ſaid *Mary Smalridge* as Adminiſtratrix aforeſaid, ſhe has therefore humbly beſought us to grant her our Royal Privilege and Licence for the ſole printing and publiſhing the ſaid Sermons for the Term of fourteen Years, and we being willing to encourage ſo uſeful and pious a Work, are graciouſly pleaſed to condeſcend to her Requeſt; and do therefore hereby, ſo far as may be agreeable to the Statute in that behalf made and provided, grant unto the ſaid *Mary Smalridge*, our Royal Licence for the ſole printing and publiſhing the ſaid Sermons, for and during the Term of fourteen Years, to be computed from the Day of the Date hereof, ſtrictly charging and prohibiting all our Subjects within our Kingdoms and Dominions to reprint or abridge the ſame, either in the like or in any other Volume or Volumes whatſoever, or to import, buy, vend, utter, or diſtribute any Copies of the ſame, or any Part thereof reprinted beyond the Seas, within the Term of fourteen Years, without the Conſent and Approbation of *Mary Smalridge*, her heirs, Executors, and Aſſigns, by writing, under her or their Hands and Seals firſt had and obtain'd, as they and every one of them offending herein will anſwer the contrary at their Perils. Whereof the Maſter, Wardens, and Company of Stationers, of our City of *London*, Commiſſioners, and other Officers of our Cuſtoms, and all other our Officers and Miniſters whom it may concern, are to take Notice that due Obedience be given to our Pleaſure herein ſignified. Given at our Court at St. *James's* the 19th Day of *December* 1724, in the eleventh Year of our Reign.

By his Majeſty's Command

HOLLES NEWCASTLE.

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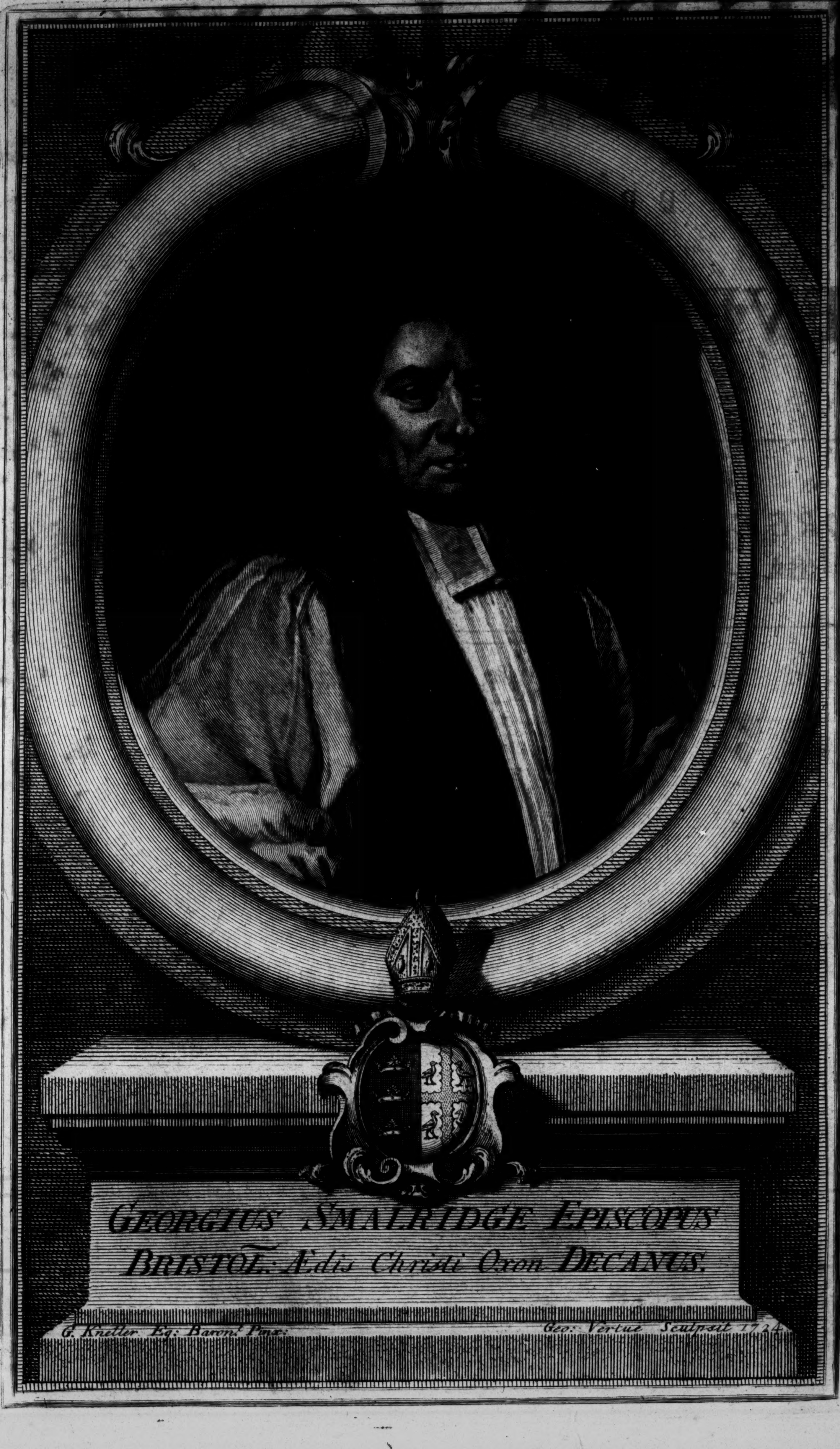

GEORGIUS SMALRIDGE EPISCOPUS
BRISTOL: Ædis Christi Oxon DECANUS.

G. Kneller Eq: Baron: Pinx:

Geo: Vertue Sculpsit 1724.

SIXTY
SERMONS
PREACH'D ON
SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

By the Right Reverend Father in God
GEORGE SMALRIDGE, D. D. Late Lord Biſhop of
BRISTOL, and Dean of *Chriſt-Church*, OXFORD.

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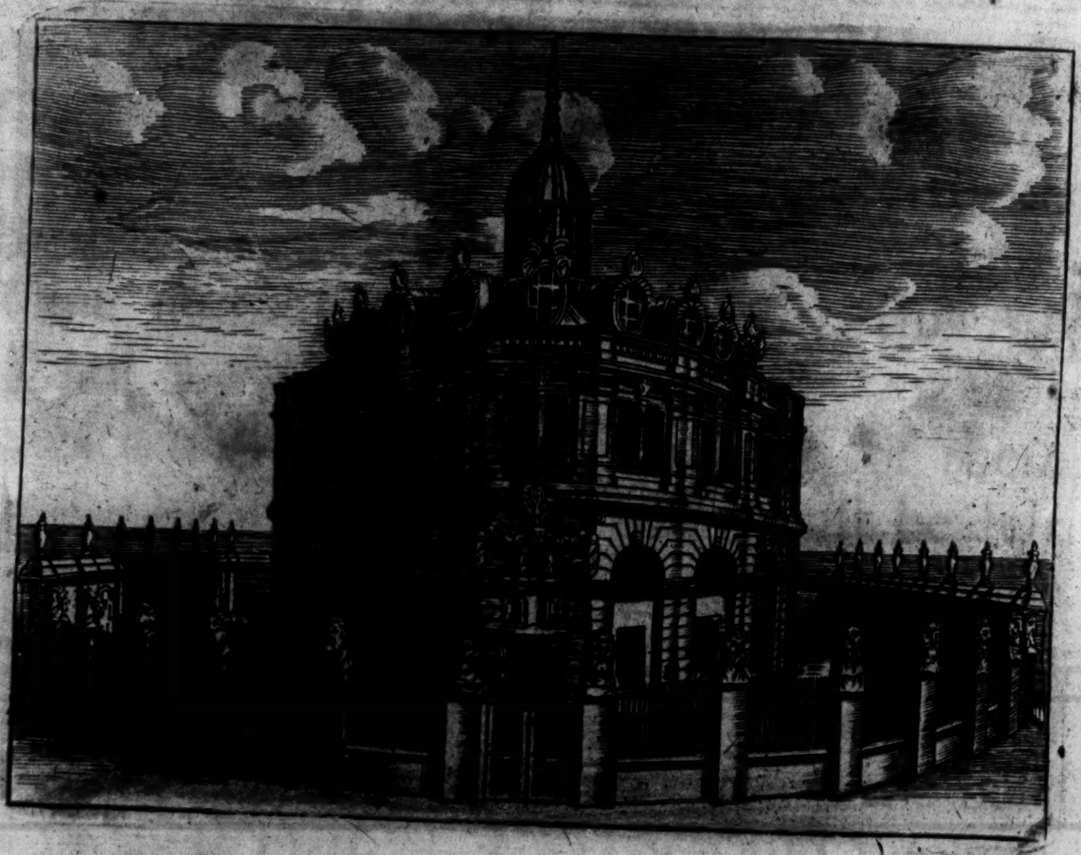

OXFORD,
Printed at the THEATER, MDCCXXIV.

Imprimatur.

MVSEVM BRITANNICVM

JO. MATHER,

VICE-CAN. *OXON.*

Oct. 28. 1724.

TO

Her ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

Princeſs of *WALES.*

MADAM,

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS having ſo graciouſly taken into Your Protection thoſe, whom the Author of theſe Sheets (now with God) has left behind him; and having ſhewn an early regard to his Memory, when with an unuſual degree of Goodneſs and Tenderneſs You condeſcended to comfort and cheriſh me, his deſolate Widow, in the extremity of my grief; I have been encouraged to hope, You will not diſdain to receive his Works alſo under Your Patronage, and do now therefore preſume humbly to offer them with this Addreſs to Your ROYAL HIGHNESS.

It cannot become me to ſay any thing of them by Way of Apology or otherwiſe: they muſt be left to ſpeak for themſelves: onely this I may be allow'd to ſay, that he never deſign'd them for the Preſs, and for that reaſon I kept them conceal'd, till being preſs'd to it by ſeveral Perſons, the beſt of Judges in theſe matters, I was prevaild upon to make them publick. And having done this, I am

ſure

ſure I ſhou'd have been wanting in Duty and Gratitude, had I ſlipt ſuch an Opportunity of publiſhing at the ſame time, the great, the many, the various Obligations laid upon me and mine, for Benefits valuable in themſelves, and more valuable as coming from Your Royal Highness. For as nothing is more glorious in your high Station than the Power of doing good, ſo no one of thoſe eminent Vertues and Graces, that adorn Your excellent Mind, ſhines with more Luſtre, or is more amiable, than the Obliging Manner with which You reach out Your Favours, and engage the Hearts of thoſe who receive them.

That God Almighty, Madam, may reward You with all the Happineſs of this World and the next; that he may long, very long preſerve to You, the greateſt of earthly Bleſſings, *His* Royal Highness *the Prince*, and You to Him, and to You both Your Royal Iſſue, is, and ſhall be to the laſt minute of my Life, the ardent Prayer of,

Your Royal Highness's

Moſt Dutiful, moſt Obedient,

and Oblig'd Servant,

Mary Smalridge.

Qualis fuerit hujuſce Operis Author, ſcire ſiquis deſiderat, inſcriptum ipſius Monumento in Eccl. Cath. Ædis Chriſti Oxon. *Epitaphium, quod ſequitur, legat.*

Hanc juxta Columnam S. E.
GEORGIUS SMALRIDGE
EPISCOPUS BRISTOLIENSIS:
Hujus *Ædis* ornamentum *Alumnus*,
Columen atque Præſidium *Canonicus*, & *Decanus*.

Huc è Scholâ *Weſtmonaſterienſi* migravit
Literis, Græcis præſertim & Latinis, inſtructiſſimus;
Quas quidem non libarat modò, ſed hauſerat, concoxerat,
In Succum ipſum & Sanguinem converterat:
His fundamentis feliciter poſitis,
Statim inter Adoleſcentes Academicos
In omni ſcribendi genere excelluit;
In omnes Scientias & ipſe facilè penetravit,
Et aliis, pro eximiâ illâ, quâ pollebat,
Et diſtinctè intelligendi, & dilucidè explicandi facultate,
Facilem aperuit viam.

E Sacris vero Literis quos perceperat fructus,
Ita maturè in lucem protulit,
Ut Illius
In concionibus frequenter habitis,
Eloquentiam virilem Pietate multâ perfuſam;
In Scriptis,
Quibus adhuc Juvenis contra Pontificios
Tum inſolentiùs ſe jactitantes certavit,
Doctrinam, Nervos, Gravitatem;
In Cathedrâ,
Ubi Regii Profeſſoris vices ſuſtinuit,
Enucleatè diſſerendi diſputandique Solertiam
Uno ore collaudarit hæc *Academia*.

Neque verò eruditus Theologus audire maluit,
Quàm Paſtor Fidus & Sedulus.
Ad novam itaque apud *Weſtmonaſterienſes* Capellam
Importunâ Populi voce acceſſitus,
Suſcepto à ſe muneri totus incubuit;
Idque, tum publicè docendo, tum privatim monendo,
Per annos ultra viginti
Multo cum audientium fructu explevit.

Ad hanc rem dum eſſet unicè attentus,
Complurium ut animarum Saluti conſuleret;
Vocatus ad Curiam Regalem Capellanus

† Primò

Primò *Carliolæ*, deinde hujus *Ædis*,
Bonorum omnium votis expetitus,
Decanatum accepit.
Enimvero *Regina* optima
Ne hìc quidem ſuam in Illum gratiam claudi voluit,
Sed eundem Epiſcopali dignitate auxit,
Juſſitque ut Regias Pauperibus largitiones
Eleemoſynarius erogaret.

Plurima enim in illo emicuerunt,
Quibus pientiſſimæ *Principi* meritò placuit.
Erat Vultu apertus & gravis; Moribus ſimplex:
In Precibus fervens; in Roſtris diſertus.
Affuit ei in totius vitæ tenore conſtantia:
In verbis Fides; in colloquiis Suavitas:
In reprehendendo Candor; in præcipiendo autoritas:
In diſcernendo, quid quaque in re ſtatui oporteret,
Tam ſubactum Judicium,
Ut alios facilè ſecum ducere potuerit;
Tanta vero Modeſtia, haud rarò ut maluerit ſequi:
Tanta in erratis aliorum ignoſcendis Humanitas,
Ut etiam in iis, quibus maximè adverſabatur,
Quæſierit ſemper quod laudaret.

Talis cùm eſſet,
Quot ſibi Cognitos,
Tot ſui Amantes, tot prope Amicos habuit,
Inimicum certè Neminem.

Lichfieldiæ natus eſt,
Oxoniæ obiit An. Dom. 1719. Æt. 57.

MARIA
Vidua ab illo relicta
Marmor hoc
Viri ſui Memoriæ
Semper charæ ſemper honorandæ
M. P.

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The Rev. Sir John Dolben *Bar.*
The Hon. the Lady Dolben.
Mrs. Elizabeth Dolben.
The Rev. Mr. Dowſe.
Mountague Drake *Eſq;*
The Rev. Mr. Drake *Rector of Sanford.*

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Mrs. Dryden.
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The Rev. Dr. Dunſtar.
The Rev. Mr. Dujon *Prebendary of York.*
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Thomas Dyke *Eſq;*
The Rev. Mr. Robert Dymmoke.
The Hon. Champion Dymmoke.

E.

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The Rev. Dr. Edmondſon.
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John Egerton *Eſq;*
John Ellis *Eſq;*
Mr. Ellis *Gentleman Commoner of Chriſt Church.*
The Rev. Mr. Ellis *of Grantham.*
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The Rev. Mr. Eldred Eſcott.
The Rev. Mr. Eſte *Student of Chriſt Church Oxon.*
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The Rev. Dr. Fiddes.
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The Rt. Hon. the Lady Mary Finch. 2
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The Hon. William Finch *Eſq;*
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The Hon. Thomas Foley *Eſq;* 2
Richard Foley *Eſq;*
Thomas Foley *Junior Eſq;* 3
The Hon. Strode Foley *Eſq;* 3
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Mr. Foreſter.
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The Rev. Mr. Fowler *A. M.*
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John Freind *M. D.*
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Lewis Gordon *Eſq;*
William Gore *Eſq; of Tring.*
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The Rev. Mr. Holte.
The Lady Barbara Holt.
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The Rev. Mr. Hunt *of Hart Hall Oxon.*
The Rev. Mr. Hutton.
Archibald Hutchiſon. *Eſq;*
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The Rev. Mr. Richard Hutchins *Fellow of Lincoln College Oxon.*
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Henry Lawton *Eſq;*
Henry Lee *Eſq;*
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Mrs. Jane Meux.
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Mrs. Barbara Morice.
William Morice *Eſq;*
The Hon. Sir Roger Moſtyn *Bar.* 10
Thomas Moſtyn *Eſq; of Rhud* 2
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Joseph Moyl *Eſq;*
Mr. Munnings *of St. Johns.*
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The Rev. Mr. Muſſon.
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The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Orrery.
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The Rt. Hon. the Lord Biſhop of Oxford.

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he Rev. Mr. Poole *Vicar of Stretton in Herefordſhire.*
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Mrs. Potts *of Lichfeild.*
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Watſon Powel *Eſq;* 2
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Preach'd before the Honourable Houſe of Commons, on *Jan.* 30. 170$\frac{19}{20}$.

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Preach'd before the right worſhipful the Court of Aldermen, on the Anniverſary of the Martyrdom of King *Charles* I. 170$\frac{8}{9}$.

UDGES XIX. 30. *And it was ſo that all that ſaw it ſaid, there was no ſuch deed done nor ſeen, from the Day that the Children of* Iſrael *came up out of the Land of* Egypt *untill this Day: Conſider of it, take Advice, and ſpeak your Minds.* 131

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God more to be feared than Man.

ISAI. LI. 12, 13. *Who art thou, that thou ſhouldſt be afraid of a Man that ſhall die, and of the Son of Man which ſhall be made as Graſs? And forgetteſt the Lord thy maker, that hath ſtretched forth the Heavens, and laid the Foundations of the Earth?* 141

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Of ſeeking the Glory of God.

OHN VIII 50. *And I ſeek not mine own Glory.* 152

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SERMON XVI.

Preach'd before the Right Hon. the Houſe of Peers, on *May* 29, 1716.

PSAL. CXV. 1. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give Glory, for thy Mercy, and for thy Truth's ſake.* 163

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- II. When he with Earneſtneſs and Vehemence repeats, *not unto us, O Lord, not unto us*, he doth by ſuch reiterated Negation imply the great Folly and Impiety of ſuch a Procedure. 166
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Truſt in God our beſt Support in all our Troubles and Afflictions.

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Of rejoycing in God.

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Joy and Gladneſs as ſuitable to our Nature and Religion, as it is agreeable to our Deſires and Inclinations. *ibid.*

This proved by ſhewing,

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I JOHN II. 4. *He that ſaith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar.* 199

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SERMON XXI.

No Sins venial; but ſome Sins, if repented of, conſiſtent with a State of Grace.

1 John III. 6. *Whoſoever abideth in him ſinneth not; whoſoever ſinneth, hath not ſeen him, neither known him.* 209

The Doctrine of abſolute and unſinning Perfection, which ſeems to be inculcated by St. *John* in this Epiſtle, compared with other Paſſages of the ſame Epiſtle, and ſtated. *ibid.*

All the Doubts that can be rais'd about this Doctrine of St. *John's*, may in good meaſure be clear'd by eſtabliſhing the four following Propoſitions.

- Prop. I. No Sins committed by Chriſtians ſo ſmall or inconſiderable in God's Sight, but that according to the Rigour of divine Juſtice, they deſerve to be puniſh'd with everlaſting Damnation. 213
- Prop. II. Some Sins in compariſon of others ſo ſmall, that according to the gracious Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, they will be forgiven, if repented of, tho' not forſaken. 215
- Prop. III. Some Sins committed by Chriſtians ſo great, that tho' their Sorrow for having committed them is never ſo deep, yet without actually forſaking them, they can have no well-grounded Hopes of Forgiveneſs. 216
- Prop. IV. No Sins committed by Chriſtians ſo great, but that if ſincerely repented of and timely forſaken, they will, thro' the Merits of *Chriſt*, be forgiven. 217

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SERMON XXII.

Jephthah's Vow.

Judges XI. 39. *And it came to paſs at the End of two Months, that ſhe return'd unto her Father, who did with her according to his Vow, which he had vowed.* 220

I. The Fact ſtated, what it was that is here ſaid to have been done by *Jephthah.* *ibid.*

II. The Quality of the Fact; whether what is here ſaid to have been done by him, was well or ill done; and if criminal, how far it admits of an Excuſe, ſo as to appear, tho' not altogether good or innocent, yet leſs ſinful and abominable. 224

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SERMON XXIII.

The Royal Benefactreſs.

reach'd in the Pariſh-Church of St. *Sepulchre, June* 1, 1710. being *Thurſday* in Whitſun Week, the Anniverſary Meeting of the Promoters of Charity-Schools.

xod. II. 9, 10. *And* Pharaoh's *Daughter ſaid unto her, take this Child away, and nurſe it for me, and I will give thee thy Wages. And the Woman took the Child, and nurſed it. And the Child grew, and ſhe brought him unto* Pharaoh's *Daughter, and he became her Son.* 233

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- Obſerv. III. Generous Souls, the more Kindneſs they have ſhewn to the indigent, the more ſtrongly they are inclin'd to be ſtill farther kind to them 238
- Obſerv. IV. Thoſe rather to be eſteem'd the Parents of Children, who give them good Education, than thoſe to whom they owe their Birth. 239

The foregoing Obſervations applied to our publick Charity Schools. 240—247

SERMON XXIV. XXV.

Of Lying.

Ephes. IV. 25. *Wherefore putting away Lying, ſpeak every Man Truth with his Neighbour; for we are Members one of another.* 248, 258

The true Purport of the Command here given, and the Firmneſs of thoſe Grounds on which it is built, will appear by inquiring;
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  - Our Relation to one another conſider'd,
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    - As we are Members of the ſame civil Society. *ibid.*
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SERMON XXVI.

Preach'd before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor:

A Spittal-Sermon on *Wedneſday* in Eaſter-Week, 1708.

Heb. XIII. 16. *To do good, and to communicate forget not; for with ſuch Sacrifices God is well pleaſ'd.* 267

The Force of that Motive, which the Apoſtle here makes uſe of to excite in us a conſtant readineſs *to do good and to communicate*, becauſe *with ſuch Sacrifices God is well pleaſ'd*, ſhown by examining,
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SERMON XXVII. XXVIII. XXIX.

Not as pleaſing Men but God.

Gal. I. 10. *For if I yet pleaſ'd Men, I ſhould not be the Servant of* Chriſt. 280, 291, 298

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St. *Paul's* Doctrine explain'd by ſhewing,
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  - 1. Whatever Men may innocently be pleaſ'd with, that we may innocently do, in order to pleaſe Men. *ibid.*
  - 2. What Men ought not to be pleaſ'd with, that we ought not to do, to pleaſe Men thereby. 282
    - As by doing any Thing that is prejudicial to their Salvation. 283
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SERMON XXX.

The Preeminence of the Goſpel above the Law.

2 COR. III. 2. *For if that which is done away is glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.* 309

The Argeement included in the Text, of the Law being aboliſh'd and the Goſpel ſubſtituted in its Room, a ſufficient Proof, were there no other, of the Preeminence of the Goſpel above the Law. *ibid.*

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SERMON XXXI.

The neceſſary Connection between the Love of God, and of our Brother.

1 JOHN IV. 21. *And this Commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his Brother alſo.* 318

The whole Compaſs of Religion compris'd by our Saviour under the two great Duties of loving God, and loving our Neighbour. *ibid.*

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SERMON XXXII.

Preach'd before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor; A Spittal-Sermon on *Eaſter Tueſday*, *April* 7. 1713.

LUKE XIV. 4. *And thou ſhalt be bleſſed, for they cannot recompenſe thee; for thou ſhalt be recompenſed at the Reſurrection of the Juſt.* 326

The particular Occaſion upon which theſe Words were ſpoken, and the general Senſe of them explain'd. 327

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SERMON XXXIII.

The Uſe of Reaſon in Religion.

ACTS XVII. 2. *And* Paul, *as his Manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath-Days reaſon'd with them out of the Scriptures.* 338

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SERMON XXXIV. XXXV. XXXVI. XXXVII.

Of Double-mindedneſs.

JAMES IV. 8. *Purify your Hearts, ye Double-minded.* 349, 358, 365, 375

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By Purity of Heart. 351
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SERMON XXXVIII.

Preach'd before the Queen on *Nov.* 5. 1705.

MATTH. X. 16. *Behold, I ſend you forth as Sheep in the midſt of Wolves; be ye therefore wiſe as Serpents, and harmleſs as Doves.* 386

The Occaſion and meaning of theſe Words, *ibid.*

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The Danger of Relapſing.

2 PET. II. 20. *If after they have eſcap'd the Pollutions of the World, thro' the Knowledge of the Lord and Saviour* Jeſus Chriſt, *they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning.* 547

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SERMON LIV.

Good Works not meritorious.

HEB. VI. 10. *God is not unrighteous to forget your Work and Labour of Love.* 554

Since this Aſſertion of the Apoſtle is capable of two different Conſtructions; according as we interpret the Word *unrighteous* to denote either one, who deprives another of his juſt Right, or one, who is not faithful to his Promiſe; it is enquir'd,
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Preach'd on *Chriſtmas-Day.*

JOHN I. 11. *He came unto his own, and his own receiv'd him not.* 564

The Text contains two Matters of Fact, the coming of *Chriſt*, and his ill Receptio
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- II. What was the Benefit of his coming. 566
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The Application to us Chriſtians, who are ready enough to blame the Ingratitude of the *Jews* in not receiving *Chriſt*, but not ſo apt to reflect in what Manner we our ſelves receive him, to whom he doth as truly and effectually come, as he came to the *Jews*. 569

SERMON LVI.

Preach'd on *Eaſter-Day.*

1 PET. I. 3. *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *which according to his abundant Mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Reſurrection of* Jeſus Chriſt, *from the dead.* 573

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The Application. 581

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Preach'd on *Whit-Sunday.*

1 COR. XII. 4. *Now there are Diverſities of Gifts, but the ſame Spirit.* 583

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- I. Of that *one Spirit* who diſpenſeth theſe diverſe Gifts. *ibid.*
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SERMON LVIII.

Balaam's Wiſh to die the Death of the righteous.

NUMB. XXIII. 10. *Let me die the Death of the righteous, and let my laſt End be like his.* 592

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SERMON LIX.

PHILIPP. I. 21. Latter Part of the Verſe,—*To die is Gain.* The whole Verſe runs thus, *For me to live is* Chriſt, *and to die is Gain.* 599

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  - 2. From the Temptations of Satan. 601
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  - 4. From the many Difficulties and Hardſhips even of our Duty it ſelf. 604
- II. Thoſe unſpeakable Advantages we are thereby made Partakers of. *ibid.*

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SERMON LX.

The intermediate State and Condition of the Souls of the righteous from their Departure out of this Life to the Reſurrection.

ISAI. LVII. 2. *He ſhall enter into Peace: They ſhall reſt in their Beds, each one walking in his Uprightneſs.* 606

The Text explain'd. *ibid.*

Different Opinions concerning the State of departed Souls, between their Departure out of this World and the Reſurrection. 607

The Opinion of them, who ſuppoſe the Happineſs of departed Souls, before the Reſurrection, not perfect, but partial, prov'd moſt agreeable to holy Writ. 608

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But it ſeems moſt probable that the Souls of the righteous and unrighteous, from their Departure out of their Bodies, dwell in ſeparate Manſions, 615

The Application. *ibid.*

SERMON I.

Of hearing the Word of GOD.

LUKE VIII. 18.

Take heed therefore how ye hear.

THOSE, who have wrote concerning the art of Rhetorick, have been very diligent to lay down certain rules and precepts, by the careful obſervance of which men might ſo ſpeak, as to perſwade. But ſince perſwaſion depends much more upon the diſpoſition of the hearers, than it doth upon the skill of the ſpeaker, it ſeems very requiſite, that the art of hearing ſhould be as much ſtudied, as the art of ſpeaking; and that rules ſhould be propos'd for the direction of men how to hear, as well as for their inſtruction how to ſpeak. Where the minds of thoſe, who are ſpoken to, are rightly prepar'd, there leſs skill in the ſpeaker will ſuffice to work upon them: but when men's underſtandings are prejudic'd, when their affections are corrupted, when their wills are biaſs'd; then the power of eloquence, be it never ſo great in it ſelf, is wholly loſt upon them; and *they are like the deaf adder that ſtoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never ſo wiſely.* Pſal. 58. 4, 5.

THAT the Word of God preach'd in theſe our days is not ſo prevalent as it was, when preach'd by the Apoſtles and Miniſters of the Goſpel in the firſt ages of the Church, is confeſſedly in great meaſure owing to the unskilfulneſs, to the infirmities, and to the defaults of thoſe, who preach it: we do not ſpeak as the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians ſpoke; and, which is ſtill worſe, we do not live as the Apoſtles liv'd; and therefore tho' we teach the ſame doctrines which they taught, tho' we enforce them with the ſame motives as they us'd; yet the Word in our mouths has not that power and efficacy, which it had in theirs. This is a truth not to be diſſembled by us without the utmoſt pitch of arrogance and hypocriſy, and at the ſame time not to be acknowledg'd without ſome ſhame, and confuſion of face; but then on the

A other

other ſide it muſt alſo be own'd, that the unfruitfulneſs of our preaching is in ſome meaſure owing to the indiſpoſitions, to the inadvertencies, and to the prepoſſeſſions of thoſe to whom we preach. The Goſpel of Chriſt preach'd by us, is not heard with that gladneſs of mind, with that ſimplicity, with that meekneſs, with that reverence, with that eagerneſs of deſire, with that purpoſe of improvement, with which it was heard by the firſt diſciples of Chriſt; and for theſe reaſons, as well as for the diſabilities of the preachers thereof, it proves leſs effectual to the ſaving of ſouls.

We do not find, that the Apoſtles themſelves were at all times equally ſucceſsful in the work of their miniſtry; even *thoſe Fiſhers of men*, as expert as they were in their calling, had not always the ſame plentiful draught; ſometimes they toil'd hard, but caught nothing; at other times their nets were ſo full, that they were not able to draw them, for the multitude of fiſhes; nay, the ſame Word preach'd at the ſame time by the ſame Apoſtle had not the ſame effect upon the ſeveral perſons, who made up the ſame audience: the account given us of a ſermon preach'd by St. *Paul* at *Rome*, to an aſſembly of *Jews*, is certainly true of ſeveral other diſcourſes made both by him, and by other Apoſtles to
Acts 28.24. other auditories, that *ſome believed the things which were ſpoken, and ſome believed not.*

Our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, *who ſpake as never man ſpake*, did not work the ſame conviction in the breaſts of all thoſe, who heard the words of grace and truth, that came out of his lips. The different reception his doctrine found, according to the different affections of his hearers, gave riſe to this inſtructive parable of the ſower, whoſe ſeed fructified more or leſs, not according to the skill of him who ſcatter'd it, or according to the virtue of the ſeed it ſelf, but according to the nature of the ſoil into which it fell: that which fell by the way-ſide, was trodden down; that which fell on rocks, wither'd away; that which fell among thorns, was choak'd; only that, which fell upon good ground, brought forth fruit, and even that not equally, but in proportion to the richneſs of the ſoil, ſome thirty-fold, ſome ſixty-fold, ſome an hundred-fold.

Since therefore the fruitfulneſs of God's Word, even when preach'd by *God the Word*, did ſo much depend upon the manner in which it was heard; ſince the failures of thoſe who heard it made it ineffectual even there, where there was no failure in him, who ſpoke it; and ſince, where there are manifold defects in the preacher, there more care is requiſite in the hearers, that caution, which was by our bleſſed Saviour given to his diſciples, cannot but be ſtill more neceſſary to be obſerv'd by us, that we ſhould *take heed how we hear*.

Now, that we may ſo hear, as to profit by hearing, it is requir'd

I. That we hear with Attention.

In the cloſe of thoſe ſeven Letters, which are addreſs'd by our Saviour to the ſeven *Aſiatick* Churches, we find one and the ſame injun-
Rev. 2. 7. ction repeated: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the churches.* When the Spirit of God is pleas'd to be the ſpeaker, there can be no excuſe for not hearkning unto him, but an utter deprivation of the faculty of hearing. As this faculty is the gift of heaven, ſo is it juſt and right, that it ſhould then be exerted with the utmoſt diligence, when God vouchſafes to ſpeak unto us from heaven. *He that planted the ear, ſhall he not hear?* ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*; and

with equal force of reaſon it may certainly be expoſtulated with us, He that planted the ear, ſhall he himſelf not be heard? The written Word is the bleſſed ordinance of God for the edification of his people; it is as food unto the ſound and healthy, as phyſick unto diſeas'd minds; but this food muſt by attention and meditation be digeſted, before it can turn into nouriſhment; this phyſick muſt be not only preſcrib'd, but taken, before we can expect, that it ſhould work in us the deſired cure.

Great and wonderful is the efficacy of God's Word towards the ſaving of ſouls; *As the rain cometh down, and the ſnow from heaven,* Iſai. 55. 10, 11. *and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give ſeed to the ſower, and bread to the eater: ſo ſhall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth,* ſaith God; *it ſhall not return unto me void, but it ſhall accompliſh that which I pleaſe, and it ſhall proſper in the thing whereto I ſent it.* But this Word of God muſt firſt have an entrance into our hearts, before it can bring forth fruit there: If the earth be clos'd up ſo, as not to drink in the rain that cometh upon it, be the ſhowers that fall from heaven never ſo plentiful, it is in vain to expect any increaſe: and if men's ears are ſhut againſt inſtruction, tho' in the language of *Moſes*, the preacher's *doctrine ſhall drop as the rain, and his ſpeech ſhall diſtill as the dew,* Deut. 32. 2. *as the ſmall rain upon the tender herb, and as the ſhowers upon the graſs*; yet under all theſe means of grace they will ſtill continue barren and unfruitful.

In profane oratory, thoſe who ſtudied to excell, thought it the firſt and principal point of their art, to make their hearers attentive; whether in the *demonſtrative* kind they prais'd or diſprais'd things or perſons; or in the *judicial* accus'd the guilty, or defended the innocent; or elſe in the *deliberative* conſulted how they might promote the intereſt, or prevent the damage of the common-weal; their chief deſign in all was to procure a favourable attention. But we, whoſe function it is to preach the uncorrupt Word of God, and to teach no other things, than what we have our ſelves learn'd, and are ready to prove from divine revelation, may very well preſume upon the attention of thoſe, to whom we addreſs our ſelves; the weight of what we have to deliver, and the authority of him, in whoſe name we deliver it, do ſufficiently beſpeak the moſt earneſt application of our hearers. For what in the *demonſtrative* kind can be of greater moment, than the praiſe of holineſs it ſelf, the diſpraiſe of ſin? What in the *judicial*, than the care to acquit our ſelves, and to eſcape condemnation, when we come to be tried at the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt? What in the *deliberative*, than a ſerious and mature conſideration, how we may avoid eternal miſery, what we muſt do to obtain everlaſting life?

If the ſearch after this divine wiſdom were much more painful and laborious, than it is, the acquiſition of it would more than countervail all the trouble we are, or can be at, in its purſuit. Thoſe, who have poſſeſs'd wiſdom in the moſt eminent meaſure, have thought no price too great to purchaſe it at, none great enough to part with it for. *Buy the truth, and ſell it not*; Prov. 23. 23. *wiſdom is the principal thing, therefore get wiſdom, and with all thy getting get underſtanding*; c. 4. 7. *the merchandiſe of it is better than the merchandiſe of ſilver, and the gain thereof than fine gold*; c. 3. 14, 15. *ſhe is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canſt deſire are not to be compar'd unto her*; are the maxims of men as wiſe in their generation, as any of thoſe, who pretend to be beſt ac-

quainted with the true value, and intrinſick worth of every thing. But when this valuable commodity is to be had at a ſmall price; when this uſeful knowledge may be obtain'd by carefully attending to the words of thoſe, who are by God appointed to teach it, and by inclining our ears to their ſayings; when we have nothing farther to do, but to *open our mouths wide*, that they may *be fill'd*; we muſt ſhew an unpardonable contempt of God's ordinance, if when *wiſdom crieth out*, and *uttereth her voice*, we will not hearken to her *counſel*, but *deſpiſe all her reproof*; if we do not liſten to the wholſome advice of the Son of
Ecclus. 6. 32, 33. *Sirach, My ſon, if thou wilt, thou ſhalt be taught; and if thou wilt apply thy mind, thou ſhalt be prudent: if thou love to hear, thou ſhalt receive underſtanding; and if thou bow thine ear, thou ſhalt be wiſe.*
verſ. 37. *Let thy mind be upon the ordinances of the Lord, and meditate continually in his commandments.*

Another qualification requiſite in thoſe who hear the Word of God read or preach'd, is, that they ſhould hear it with Impartiality.

Men are very forward to hearken unto, and ready to believe ſuch things, as are welcome and pleaſing; very unwilling to hear, very backward to give their aſſent to ſuch doctrines, as are harſh and unpleaſant. When it is for their intereſt and advantage, that what is told them from the Word of God ſhould be true, they entertain no doubts of it, ſtart no objections againſt it; but if it any way thwarts their inclinations, if it diſturbs their eaſe, if they cannot admit it to be true and certain, without apprehending therefrom ſome great inconvenience and miſchief to themſelves, they then are very nice and ſcrupulous in examining it, very apt to give great weight to any little objections, that may be made againſt it, and very unwilling to be perſwaded, even where they can find no reaſon, why they are not perſwaded.

The credibility of a doctrine, we all know, depends intirely upon the ſtrength of thoſe reaſons, or the authority of thoſe teſtimonies, which are brought for the truth of it; and yet it is plain matter of fact, which every one's obſervation muſt have furniſh'd him with, that the ſame arguments or teſtimonies, which are allow'd ſufficient for the proof of welcome and agreeable truths, will not be allow'd to ſuffice for the proof of other truths, which are leſs reliſhing, and which we therefore do leſs deſire to be true. But if we would approve our ſelves impartial hearers of God's Word, we muſt ſhew our ſelves ready to receive all the truths, which can be prov'd to us to be reveal'd from Heaven, with the ſame eaſineſs of aſſent; we muſt give as much credence to the Miniſters of the Goſpel, when they denounce God's judgments againſt thoſe ſins, of which we know our ſelves to be guilty, as when they ſhew the guilt and demerit of ſuch tranſgreſſions, as our conſciences do acquit us of; we muſt not only hear them gladly, when they preach comfortable things, but we muſt look upon them as the Meſſengers of God, when from him they bring unto us ſad tidings; and muſt be equally inclin'd to believe and to fear the threats that are gone out from the mouth of God, as to catch hold of his moſt gracious promiſes. Both are atteſted by the ſame Authority; both made known to us by the ſame infallible Spirit of God: ſo that we have no more reaſon to doubt of the truth of the former, than we have to queſtion the truth of the latter. God's veracity is as much concern'd to execute his threats, as it is to fulfil his promiſes; and yet many Chriſtians, who have no manner of ſcruple, but what God hath promis'd, that he will ſurely perform, are loath to be-

eve, that what he hath threatned, that alſo he will certainly accom-
liſh. For what other reaſon can we aſſign, but this, why men ſhould
reedily catch at thoſe precious promiſes, which are in ſome parts of
oly Scripture made to faith, and in the mean time overlook thoſe
vere menaces, which are ſcatter'd in every page of Holy Writ againſt
l manner of ſin and diſobedience? Are we more plainly taught, that
hoſoever believeth ſhall be ſav'd, than we are, that *except we repent* Mark 16. 16.
e ſhall periſh? Is the Apoſtle deſervedly to be believ'd, when he tells Luc. 3. 13.
, that *the juſt ſhall live by faith*, and is the ſame Apoſtle leſs to be Rom. 1.17.
redited, when he aſſures us, that *Chriſt will take vengeance on all them,* 2 Theſſ.1.8,9.
hat obey not his Goſpel, and that they ſhall be puniſh'd with everlaſt-
g deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord? *It is a faithful ſaying,* 1 Tim. 1.15.
hat Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners, ſaith St *Paul* to
imothy; *It is a faithful ſaying, that they which have believ'd in God,* Tit. 3. 8.
ught to be careful to maintain good works, ſaith the ſame St. *Paul* to
itus: how then, in the name of God, doth it happen, that of theſe
wo ſayings, equally faithful, equally *worthy of* our *acceptation*, equal-
y affirm'd to be ſo by the ſame inſpir'd Teacher, *one ſhould be taken*
nd the other left, one ſhould be greedily embrac'd by us, and the other
wholly diſregarded?

GREAT and exceedingly glorious are the advantages, which in the
criptures are propos'd, and by the Miniſters of Chriſt ſpeaking from
he Scriptures promis'd to all true-believers; manifold and terrible are
he judgments, which the ſame Scriptures denounce, and which God's
Miniſters, if they will not betray their truſt, muſt proclaim aloud againſt
ll thoſe, *who hold the truth* of Chriſt *in unrighteouſneſs*. What faſcina-
ion then hath beguil'd the ſons of men, that we find them ſo credulous
n applying to themſelves the privileges that are appropriate to the faith-
ul, whilſt they are ſo little kept in awe by the woes and curſes that
re thundred out againſt the impure, the unrighteous, and the ungod-
y! Whilſt we inſtruct our people out of the Scriptures, that *we* Epheſ. 1. 7.
ave redemption through the *blood* of Chriſt; even *the forgiveneſs of*
ins, according to the riches of his grace; that He *gave himſelf for us* c. 5. 2.
n offering, and a ſacrifice of God, for a ſweet-ſmelling ſavour, to the
nd that He might *make reconciliation for iniquity, and put away ſin* Dan. 9. 24.
y the ſacrifice of himſelf; whilſt we magnifie the power and excel- Heb. 9.26.
ency of God's free grace, we are ſure to be hearkned to with joy,
nd are perhaps applauded as ſound, orthodox, ſoul-comforting, and
true Goſpel-preachers: but when at any time we warn our flocks out
of the ſame Scriptures, that *this grace of God, that bringeth ſalvation,* Tit.2. 11, 12.
teaches us to deny ungodlineſs, and wordly luſts, and to live ſoberly,
righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world: when we put them in mind,
that Jeſus Chriſt did therefore *give himſelf for us, that he might re-*
deem us from all iniquity, (from the practice, as well as from the guilt
of ſin) *and might purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good*
works; whilſt we give them true notions concerning the end of Chriſt's
ſufferings, and ſhew them, that *Chriſt his own ſelf bare our ſins in his* 1 Pet. 2. 14.
own body upon the tree, to this very purpoſe, *that being dead unto*
ſin they ſhould live unto righteouſneſs; whilſt we urge the neceſſity of
an holy life, and exhort them to the plain duties of ſobriety, and tem-
perance, of doing no wrong to any, or of making reſtitution where
they have done wrong, of living peaceably with all men, and of being
diligent in their callings, of being compaſſionate to the miſerable, and

of being ready to diſtribute liberally, where an uncommon calamity calls for their charitable relief, we are in danger of being deſpis'd as empty, dry, unedifying Teachers, if not exploded as maintainers of a Legal-righteouſneſs, and enemies to the free grace of the Goſpel.

Thus doth prejudice and partiality corrupt the minds of men, and hinder that good influence, which the Word of God read or preach'd unto them might otherwiſe have upon their lives and converſations; of which partiality as there are many undeniable inſtances, ſo I know of none more flagrant, than the cavils, which have been brought by ancient and modern Hereticks, and have been too much countenanc'd by ſome of our own communion, againſt the eternity of Hell-torments. It is ſaid by our Saviour of the wicked, that *they ſhall go into everlaſting puniſhment*, juſt as it is ſaid of the righteous, that *they ſhall go into life eternal.* Mat. 25. 46. The ſame word in the original is made uſe of to expreſs the duration of the puniſhment, which is us'd to ſignify the duration of the reward: it is not at all diſputed, but that the happineſs ſhall be without end; but it is at the ſame time pretended, that there may, and that probably there will be an end put to the puniſhment. The mighty diſproportion there is between the ſinful pleaſures of this ſhort life, and the ſufferings of impenitent ſinners to all eternity, is urg'd as a good argument againſt the perpetuity of ſuch ſufferings: but the equal diſparity there is betwixt the imperfect obedience of a ſhort part of a ſhort life, and that *incorruptible inheritance, which fadeth not away reſerv'd for* the obedient, is never offer'd as an argument, is not thought of any force, againſt the eternity of the joys prepar'd for the Bleſſed.

Some fanciful dreamers have deluded themſelves and others with the groundleſs hopes of annihilation to thoſe, who are condemn'd to Hell-torments; but I do not know, that any one hath ever fram'd an hypotheſis concerning the annihilation of the glorified Saints in heaven. If it ſhould be ask'd of thoſe, who deny the perpetual duration of theſe torments, why they ſhould be repreſented in Scripture as eternal, if really they are not ſo, they will readily tell us, that it was very proper the threats ſhould be ſet forth in ſuch a manner as might render them moſt effectual to deter men from all ſinful practices; but it might with as good reaſon be pretended, that ſince men are to be allur'd to the practice of virtue by the moſt engaging hopes, the joys of heaven were alſo to be expreſs'd in ſuch high and lofty terms, as might make them look moſt inviting; tho' after all perhaps they may be neither ſo great, nor ſo durable, as they are in Scripture repreſented: and yet, tho' there is altogether as good reaſon for the expreſſion's being heightned in one caſe, as is in the other, it is agreed on all hands, that eternity, when attributed to the happineſs of thoſe who ſhall be ſav'd, is to be underſtood in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word, and yet there is no hyperbole of ſpeech, no ſtraining of the language beyond its natural pitch, when the glories of heaven are in Scripture repreſented to us as everlaſting.

From this inſtance, as well as from others, which have been before alleg'd, it is plain, that men believe not the Goſpel-doctrines according as they have grounds, but according as they have a mind to believe. Men are very well pleas'd that the joys of heaven ſhould be eternal, and therefore they with eagerneſs embrace thoſe promiſes, which are given of eternal happineſs; they underſtand 'em in the moſt favourable and extenſive ſenſe; and tho' in Scripture ſome things are call'd eternal, which in rigor of ſpeech are not ſo, yet they have no

doubt,

doubt, but the happineſs of the Saints is eternal in the moſt literal import of that term. But they have no deſire at all, that the torments of hell, which may perhaps be their own final portion, ſhould be eternal; and therefore becauſe eternity is in ſome places of Scripture applied to things, which ſhall at laſt ceaſe, they are willing, they are reſolv'd to underſtand it in this lower ſenſe, whenever they find it aſcrib'd to the torments of the Damn'd. But to take up our opinions at this rate, is to determine our aſſents not by reaſon, but by paſſion; not according to the greater or leſs probability of the truth, but according to its being more or leſs agreeable to our corrupt inclinations: whereas if we would ſtrip our ſelves of all undue prejudices, and proceed according to the meaſures of right reaſon, thoſe truths, which are equally well-prov'd unto us, would find equal readineſs of admittance with us: we ſhould not pick and chooſe what doctrines we would embrace, whilſt we rejected others not leſs certain, or leſs evident; but ſhould as eaſily be perſwaded that no *drunkards* or *fornicators*, for example, *ſhall* 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10.
inherit the kingdom of God, as that no *thieves* ſhall, tho' our own hearts do perhaps accuſe us of drunkenneſs or uncleanneſs, and acquit us of the ſin of ſtealing. Neither would immorality and vice ſpread their infection ſo far and wide as they do, in this wicked and degenerate age, nor would the Church of God be ſo miſerably torn aſunder as it is by Schiſm, if all the members of our own communion gave as firm an aſſent to thoſe many texts of Scripture, which condemn all ungodlineſs of life, as they do to thoſe, which forbid diviſions; and if thoſe, who unhappily ſeparate from us, would but pay half that regard to thoſe many plain texts, which recommend unity, which they do to that one miſtaken one which forbids *will-worſhip*: if men could but once be prevail'd Coloſſ. 2. 23.
upon to be impartial hearers, we might then hope, that they would be alſo profitable hearers of God's Word.

ANOTHER qualification requir'd of thoſe, who would be profitable hearers of the Word of God is, that they ſhould hear it with Meekneſs.

THIS is expreſsly enjoyn'd by St. *James*, that *we ſhould receive with* Jam. 1. 21.
meekneſs the engrafted word, which is able to ſave our ſouls. There is in the generality of men ſuch a rooted principle of ſelf-love, ſuch an averſion to any thing that tends to abate the good opinion they have of themſelves, ſuch a willingneſs to be deceiv'd concerning their own ſpiritual ſtate, and ſuch a reluctancy to have their eyes open'd to ſee their danger, that the only way to gain their good opinion is to flatter them in their ſins; *to ſpeak peace to them, where there is no peace*; and to be nicely careful not to do, or ſay any thing, which may awaken their conſciences out of the deep ſlumber they are in. They go on ſecurely in the paths of vice without any inward check or remorſe, and whilſt they apprehend no danger from theſe wicked courſes, whilſt they fondly indulge themſelves in their ſins, they think they have a right to the ſame indulgence from others, and therefore are highly incens'd againſt any of our Tribe, who pragmatically intermeddle in their matters, and pretend to have a more tender concern for their ſalvation, than they have for their own. Men would willingly enjoy the pleaſures of ſin, without feeling the ſmart of it; its work they like very well, but they are not ſo well pleas'd with the wages of it: that therefore the fear of future torments may not imbitter their preſent enjoyments, they do all they can to ſhake off the belief of a judgment to come.

come. But if the principles of Religion chance to be too ſtrongly implanted in them, ſo as not eaſily to be rooted out; if the early impreſſions of it are too deep to be quite deface'd, their next care is to put the evil day as far off from them as they can, to baniſh the thoughts of it out of their minds, and to diſmiſs ſuch melancholy conſiderations as *Felix* did St. *Paul, to a more convenient ſeaſon.* It is no wonder therefore if they cannot with patience bear thoſe Preachers of God's Word, who go about to detect this dangerous cheat, which they put upon themſelves, who endeavour to bring home to their view thoſe dangers, which they ſtrive to keep at the utmoſt diſtance; and who daſh their mirth, and ſpoil the jollity of their ſenſual pleaſures, by warning them of that ſword of divine vengeance, which hangs over them, is kept up by a very ſlender thread, and is every moment ready to drop down upon their heads. It was this love of preſent eaſe, this hatred of light, this fear of being diſturb'd in the quiet enjoyment of
Isai. 30.10.11. their ſins, which made the rebellious *Iſraelites* to *ſay to the ſeers, See not; and to the prophets, Propheſie not unto us right things, ſpeak unto us ſmooth things, propheſie deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aſide out of the path, cauſe the Holy One of Iſrael to ceaſe from before us.*

How natural ſoever the love of truth is ſaid to be, yet ſome truths are ſure to be hated, and to expoſe them to hatred, who are ſo hardy as to tell 'em; and tho' the deſire of ſelf-preſervation is alſo ſaid both to be natural, and to work ſtrongly in all men: yet it is plain, that ſome men are ſo much devoted to ruine, ſo deſperately in love with their own deſtruction, that they look upon thoſe as their beſt friends, who moſt contribute to it, and thoſe as their very worſt enemies, who go about to ſave them againſt their wills. Now whilſt men are thus impatient of thoſe godly admonitions, which are intended for the benefit of their ſouls, inſtead of reaping any advantage from them, they are rather made worſe by them: by the ruggedneſs of their humours, and the peeviſhneſs of their tempers, that wholſome food, which is adminiſtred to them, is turn'd into gall; and that ſpiritual drink, which ſhould refreſh the thirſt of their ſouls, is unto them as vinegar: *the things that ſhould have been for their* eternal *wealth*, and, if they had receiv'd them as they ought, would have been ſo, do, through their own perverſeneſs, prove *unto them an occaſion of falling.*

If therefore men would receive profit by hearing the Word of God preach'd unto them, they muſt be ſure to hear it with candour, and meekneſs; with patience and temper; without any ill-will, nay with ſome degrees of good-will towards thoſe who preach it. Were ſpiritual reproof for our ſins an injury to us, and ſuch as tended to our hurt, did it proceed from malice, and were it deſign'd for our detriment; yet, like other wrongs, it ſhould be born by us with patience; but ſince it hath a real tendency to our good, and, unleſs it be through our own fault, cannot but be ſubſervient to our greateſt intereſt; ſince it is an act of friendſhip, and the proper fruit of love; ſince it is ſo far from being an unpardonable injury, that it is the nobleſt inſtance of chriſtian charity towards us, thoſe who adminiſter it to us have a title not only to our excuſe, but to our thanks; and thoſe who receive it with thankful minds will make it prove unto themſelves, what in its own nature it truly is, a real and mighty benefit unto their precious and immortal ſouls.

Another qualification requiſite in thoſe, who hear the Word of

God preach'd unto them, is, that they ſhould hear it with an actual Intention of practiſing it.

SOME there are, who place a great part of their Religion in hearing Sermons; who think, that if they have been preſent at theſe pious exerciſes, if they have carefully liſtned to them, but eſpecially if they have been warmly affected by them, they have, without going any farther, done a very good work, in it ſelf, and for its own ſake, holy and acceptable unto God. Such perſons as theſe do not ſufficiently diſtinguiſh between eſſential, and auxiliary duties; between ſuch as are on account of their own intrinſick goodneſs requir'd, and ſuch as are enjoyn'd us, merely as they are ſubſervient to the former. Tho' all the duties of the Goſpel are commanded by the ſame Authority, yet the Goſpel doth not lay the ſame ſtreſs upon all: and tho' it doth not become us arbitrarily to compare the duties of our Religion, and according to our own fancies to cheapen ſome, by enhancing the price of others, where the Law of God makes no ſuch diſcrimination; yet, where the Law it ſelf expreſly makes a difference, there it is not only lawful, but neceſſary; we not only may, but muſt make the ſame diſtinction.

NOW any one, who is converſant in the Scriptures, cannot but be aware that the duties there commanded are ſometimes brought to a compariſon, and being weigh'd in the ballance of the ſanctuary are pronounc'd to be ſome of leſs, ſome of greater moment: ſome are ſaid to have an abſolute, ſome only a relative value; ſome are in their own proper nature good, and therefore always good; ſome are good only in ſuch a reſpect, and therefore where that reſpect fails, are no longer good: ſome have that cloſe and inſeparable connexion with a ſtate of purity and holineſs, that we cannot conceive, but they muſt be requir'd at our hands by a pure and holy Being: ſome do only contribute to the forming in us new or greater degrees of holineſs, and as far as they do ſo contribute, and no farther, are well-pleaſing unto God. Now the hearing of the Word of God is to be plac'd under this lower rank of duties; it is not upon its own account, and for its own ſake acceptable, but as an inſtrument and mean appointed, among many others, for our improvement in chriſtian graces: where it is made uſe of as an inſtrument, there may be hop'd great advantages from it; but where it is reſted in as it ſelf an end, and not directed to any higher and nobler end, there it becomes uſeleſs and unprofitable. As often therefore as we hear the Word of God, we ought to hear it with an actual purpoſe and ready diſpoſition of mind to obey it; we ought not only to be in a poſture of attention, greedy to receive it, but in a poſture of motion alſo, in haſt to go about it, and do it. The advice given by God to his Prophet *Ezekiel* is in this caſe applicable to us, *Son of man, ſtand upon thy feet, and I will ſpeak unto thee.* Ezek. 2. 1. God ſpeaks not to the idle, lazy, and unconcern'd Hearer, but to him that is vigilant and arrect; that is upon the watch, to take the firſt intimations of his will, and upon his feet, ready to run upon any errand, on which he ſhall be ſent. We may then expect to find benefit by frequenting the aſſemblies of the Church, when we come thither with ſincere intentions of knowing God's will, in order to practice it: when we approach to the Lord's Houſe with the ſame diſpoſition of mind, wherewith the Gentiles are by the Prophet repreſented as coming into the Chriſtian Church, who invite one another to the profeſſion of the Goſpel, in theſe remarkable Words: *Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the* Iſai. 2. 3.

houſe of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths.

An heathen Philoſopher, who has given us an exact Manual of moral Duties, has at the cloſe of it made this wiſe and inſtructive Reflection: "If you obſerve any man value himſelf for underſtanding *Chryſippus*'s "books thoroughly; think thus with your ſelf, if *Chryſippus* had not wrote "obſcurely, this man would have nothing to boaſt of. Well, but what is "it, that I would know? I would learn my duty, that I might practiſe "it. I enquire therefore who will beſt inſtruct me in my duty, and when "I am inform'd that *Chryſippus* will, I conſult him. But I do not of my "ſelf underſtand his writings; I look out therefore for a good Interpre- "ter; but hitherto I have made no proficiency. Having by my own "ſagacity, or by the help of my Interpreter, found out the true mean- "ing of *Chryſippus*, it remains that I do what he teaches."

What this acute Writer ſaith of *Chryſippus*, and his Interpreters, let us apply to the Goſpel, and to the authoriz'd Expounders of it: or rather let us attend to the very ſame Doctrine, taught us by the inſpired Writers, who have given us more excellent rules, and more exalted precepts of Morality. Jam. 1. 22. Let us as St. *James* exhorts, *be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving our own ſelves.* Let what is written in the cloſe of the Revelations made by God unto his ſervants, be carefully remembred, and duly conſider'd by us: Rev. 22. 14. *Bleſſed are they* (not that know, but) *that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the City.*

SER-

SERMON II.

The Profitableneſs of Prayer.

Job XXI. 15.

What profit ſhould we have, if we pray unto him?

The firſt ſermon on this Text.

The whole verſe runs thus:

What is the Almighty, that we ſhould ſerve him? and what profit ſhould we have, if we pray unto him?

THESE words are an objection of bold, ungodly, and profane men againſt the duty of Prayer. An anſwer to this objection, and a defence of this weighty, neceſſary, and important duty, ſhall be the ſubject of my following diſcourſe.

THE ſtreſs of the argument here urg'd againſt Prayer is taken from its Unprofitableneſs: it doth not procure us, ſay the objectors, the advantages, which might be expected from it, and therefore it ought to be laid aſide. This argument would be of no manner of force, if it could be prov'd, as perhaps it fairly might, that God by his ſovereign and abſolute power may exact any duty from his creatures, without obliging himſelf to reward the performance of ſuch duty; and that therefore if God requires us peremptorily to pray to him, we ſhall be bound to do this, tho' we have no proſpect of a bleſſing from it.

FOR God hath an unlimited and uncontrollable authority over all his creatures: whatever faculties and abilities they have, they receiv'd from him; and therefore he hath an uncontrovertible right to order and diſpoſe of all their actions as he pleaſes. That he annexes a reward to the obſervance of his laws, is an inſtance of his great mercy and goodneſs; but if he is pleas'd to require obedience to his laws, without the promiſe of any advantage from ſuch obedience, he requires no more than his due, and we in juſtice are bound to pay it.

BUT becauſe God is pleas'd to incite us to the obſervance of his commands by the promiſe of a reward; and becauſe there are peculiar bleſſings annex'd to this particular duty of Prayer, I ſhall not inſiſt on the abſolute right of God to require it, but ſhall allow that the Unprofitableneſs of Prayer, if it were well prov'd, would be too ſtrong an objection againſt Prayer, to admit of a clear and ſatisfactory anſwer.

Now that Prayer is unprofitable, the objectors againſt this duty muſt ſhew either from reaſon, or from experience: they muſt either prove that God cannot hear Prayers, or that he doth not; that it is inconſiſtent with the notion of God, that he ſhould be prevail'd upon by the Prayers of men; or that by trial it has been found, that he has never been prevail'd on. The objectors therefore againſt the Profitableneſs of Prayer go both theſe ways to work; they ſometimes pretend to argue from the reaſon of the thing, that Prayers can be of no efficacy to work upon God; ſometimes they allege it as matter of fact, that the Prayers which are offer'd to God, are experimentally found to be ineffectual.

Either of theſe proofs, if they could be made out with as clear evidence, as they are aſſerted with aſſurance, muſt be allow'd to be ſufficient to prove the Uſeleſneſs of Prayer. For whether the nature of God be ſuch, that he is not to be wrought upon by Prayer: or whether the truth of matter of fact be ſuch, that he is not wrought on; upon both theſe ſuppoſitions, Prayer muſt be own'd to be unprofitable. Indeed one of the objectors ſuppoſitions includes the other. For if they can prove from the nature, or the attributes of God, that he cannot be prevail'd upon by the Prayers of men, they need not trouble themſelves to prove, that he is not: ſince 'tis freely own'd by all, who acknowledge a God, and form any right notions of the Godhead, that he doth not do any thing, which is inconſiſtent with his nature, and eſſential attributes; and on the other ſide, if we can prove againſt theſe bold objectors, that God is ſometimes wrought on by the Prayers of men, we need not trouble our ſelves to prove againſt them, that he can be wrought upon: ſince no one can be ſo abſurd, as to deny, that God can do, what he actually hath done, and what our own experience tells us, he hath done.

Therefore to all the objections, that wicked men can raiſe againſt the Efficacy of prayer, it would be ſufficient for good men to make this one ſhort, but full anſwer: we have often found, that the Prayers, which we have pour'd forth before God have been graciouſly heard at the throne of mercy, and therefore we will ſtill call upon him: when in our neceſſities we have fled unto him, he hath deliver'd us; and therefore in him we truſt, that he will ſtill deliver us.

But theſe importunate objectors are not to be confuted by experience: they will make no trial themſelves, and they will not be concluded by others: they cannot tell by their own experience, that God hears Prayers, becauſe they are reſolv'd not to call upon him; and they pretend to call in queſtion the truth of our experience. For ſince we cannot ſhew them that inviſible hand, which reaches out bleſſings to us; ſince God doth not exhibit himſelf to our ſenſes, openly and viſibly dealing forth his favours to thoſe, who make their ſupplications to him, they will not allow it to be a good proof, that becauſe we receive what we ask, we do therefore receive, becauſe we ask. The bleſſings we receive, do, they own, follow our prayers; but they will not own, that they are the conſequence of our Prayers. It may ſometimes caſually happen, that what we pray for, that we receive; but this receipt is not, they ſay, the reſult of our Prayers, but of chance, or of neceſſity. What

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we do receive after we have pray'd, we do not, ſay they, obtain by our Prayer; but perhaps might, or neceſſarily muſt have receiv'd, tho' we had never pray'd. They therefore ſtill inſiſt upon it, that we do not put them off with arguments taken from our own experience, which they pretend may as eaſily be denied by them, as they are affirm'd by us; but that we ſhould examine the force of their objections, and either plainly diſprove them, or fairly yield to them.

As to thoſe, who deny the Being of a God, and in conſequence of that denial, urge the Uſeleſneſs of prayer, I ſhall not meddle with their objections: both becauſe they would carry me off to another ſubject, the proof of a Deity; and becauſe I am willing to believe, that how degenerate ſoever the age is, there are few, who make ſuch an objection as this againſt Prayer.

As to thoſe, who own the Exiſtence of God, but deny his Providence; who own him to be a glorious, infinite, eternal, all-wiſe, all-powerful Being, but complement him out of the government of the world, as much below the care and inſpection of his tranſcendent Majeſty, their objections being level'd not directly againſt the particular duty of Prayer, but againſt all religious Worſhip, all interpoſition of God in the concerns of men, and all dependence of men upon God, do not properly fall under our preſent enquiry, and therefore are not to be anſwer'd upon this occaſion; but, as being foreign to the preſent purpoſe, are to be over-rul'd.

The only objections, which are worth our conſidering in reference to the ſubject now in debate, are thoſe, that are brought by ſuch as pretend to own the Being of God, and to acknowledge his Providence; to own his power, whereby he is able, and his goodneſs, whereby he is diſpos'd to grant the requeſts of ſupplicants; and yet, notwithſtanding theſe conceſſions, pretend to raiſe difficulties concerning the Profitableneſs of prayer. For they tell us, that God is an unchangeable Being, *the ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever*; the ſame, not only in his nature and eſſence, but alſo in his counſels and purpoſes; that *every good gift, and every perfect gift is* indeed *from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights*; but that *with* this Father of lights there *is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning*, and that therefore he is not to be mov'd by Prayers, to ſend down theſe gifts upon clamorous & importunate petitioners for them; that *God is not a man, that he ſhould* alter his purpoſes, *neither the ſon of man, that he ſhould repent*: hath he reſolv'd that he will not do a thing, and will he do it at the requeſt of vain man? or hath he determin'd to do any thing, *and ſhall he not make it good*, becauſe frail and impotent man deſires the contrary?

Heb. 13. 8.
Jam. 1. 17.
Num. 23. 19.

All change, ſay they, among men argues weakneſs, and infirmity of mind: he that changes his mind, changes it either for the better, or for the worſe: to change for the worſe ſhews want of wiſdom, and is indeed an inſtance of folly; to change for the better ſhews, that the perſon, who makes ſuch change, was once in the wrong. Now is all change a ſign of weakneſs in men, and ſhall we charge it upon God? When men are prevail'd upon by importunity, to do otherwiſe than they intended, we are wont to inquire into their intentions; and if they were wiſe and good, to condemn their unſteadineſs and imprudence, in raſhly departing from them; if they were fooliſh, or evil, to commend them indeed for changing them, but at the ſame time to accuſe them of raſhneſs or folly, for having ever entertain'd them. But none of theſe imputations can without blaſphemy be thought to affect God: he cannot alter his counſels for the worſe, becauſe there is no error or iniquity with him; he cannot change his purpoſes for the better, becauſe they are always perfectly good and wiſe. What therefore he once reſolves, he ſteadily executes, and is not to be mov'd, ſay they, by the cries and ſupplications of men.

Now, whatever difficulties there may be in this objection, they are not ſo great as to ſhake our aſſurance, that God hears the Prayers of men. For the unchangeableneſs of God cannot be better prov'd from reaſon, or from Scripture, than his readineſs to ſupply the wants of thoſe, who call upon him. It is not more inconſiſtent with the perfections of God to be wavering and changeable, than it is to be deaf to the Prayers of his ſervants, and unable, or unwilling to grant their requeſts. Whatever great notions we form of the virtue and merit of ſteadineſs and conſtancy, it never enters into the character we give of a gracious Prince, that he is inexorable. It may not perhaps be eaſie for us, who are in the dark as to our own natures, and much more as to the incomprehenſible and unſearchable nature of God, to reconcile his attributes one with the other; his immutability with his being prevail'd on by Prayer; but we muſt not therefore deny the one, for fear of overthrowing the other: both are prov'd from the ſame principles of Reaſon, and Revelation; both ſtand upon the ſame foundation; both neceſſarily reſult from the perfections of the Godhead: whatever therefore we, by our narrow conceptions of things ſo much above our reach, may be apt to imagine of their inconſiſtency, they are in themſelves certainly conſiſtent one with another; and being actually joyn'd in the ſame divine nature, are not to be thought incompatible.

But tho' this knot might fairly be cut by the anſwer I have given, and tho' both theſe attributes being prov'd to belong to God, it will neceſſarily follow, that they are conſiſtent; yet becauſe their ſuppos'd inconſiſtency is urg'd as an argument, that one of theſe doth not belong to God (for from his immutability 'tis argued, that he is not, cannot be prevail'd on by Prayer) I ſhall trie to untie the knot, by ſhewing that God may be unchangeable, and yet that he may be wrought upon by the Prayers of men; or, which is all one, that he may grant thoſe things to men upon their requeſts, which without ſuch requeſts he would not grant.

How unchangeable ſoever the purpoſes of God are, they are not ſo abſolute, as to exclude all conditions: he determines to beſtow his favours upon men, but not upon men indiſcriminately, but men ſo and ſo qualified. As for inſtance, God determines to give grace to the humble, and pardon of ſins to the penitent: humility and repentance are therefore the conditions on man's part, on which depends his receiving grace and remiſſion from God. When man of proud becomes humble; of a ſinner, penitent; God confers that grace on the one, and forgiveneſs on the other, which, without ſuch qualifications in man, he would not have beſtow'd: ſo that God doth not change his purpoſes, but man changes his ways, and by changing becomes ſuch a perſon, as God, according to his unchangeable purpoſe, determin'd to beſtow his favours upon.

So alſo in the caſe before us, God reſolves to ſupply the wants of his creatures, not indiſcriminately the wants of all his creatures, whether it be ſuitable to his wiſdom, and their occaſions to ſupply the wants of of them, or not; but the wants of thoſe, that are ſo and ſo diſpos'd to receive and deſerve ſuch ſupply. Among other diſpoſitions, which he requires in thoſe, whoſe wants he is determin'd to ſupply, the very chief of all is this, dependence upon him, and an entire confidence in his goodneſs and bounty: the proper expreſſion of this truſt and dependence is our looking up unto God, *from* whom *cometh our help?* When we do thus expreſs our reliance upon him, he vouchſafes to pour down thoſe bleſſings upon us, which without ſuch inſtances of truſt and confidence on our ſide he would have withdrawn from us. His purpoſes therefore he ſteadily, and unchangeably keeps; but we by becoming petitioners at the throne of grace qualifie our ſelves for his mercies, and render our ſelves ſuch, as he hath always purpos'd to favour.

God by his infinite wiſdom foreſees the wants and the diſpoſitions of all men; to men labouring under ſuch and ſuch wants, and at the ſame time having ſuch and ſuch requir'd diſpoſitions, he reſolves to grant his bleſſings. One of theſe requiſite diſpoſitions is Prayer, one I mean among many other. Tho' therefore he doth not always beſtow his mercies, where this is found, becauſe others, as neceſſary as this, may be wanting; yet where this is not found, he may juſtly deny his gifts, becauſe one of thoſe conditions, which he neceſſarily requires, is wanting. Whether therefore we neglect to pray unto him, and receive not; or whether we do ask, and receive, his purpoſe is ſtill one and the ſame: there is no change in him, who ſteadily executes his deſign of granting the petitions of thoſe who ask, and are, according to the terms of his infinite mercy, worthy of them. All the change is in us, who by asking, as we ought, make our ſelves in a manner fit for his favours; becauſe we approve our ſelves to be ſuch, as he hath unalterably purpos'd to vouchſafe his favours to.

To make this, if poſſible, plainer to you from an inſtance out of Holy Writ. In the 38th chapter of *Iſaiah* we read, that *Hezekiah was ſick unto death*, that is, he was ſick of a diſtemper, which, if the extraordinary mercy of God had not interpos'd, would have prov'd mortal. *Iſaiah* the Prophet is ſent to him to tell him from God, that he *ſhould die, and not live.* However we find, that upon his *praying unto the Lord*, and pleading thoſe qualifications, which beſt entitle God's ſervants to his extraordinary mercies; as that he had *walked before* God *in truth, and with a perfect heart, and had done that which was good in his ſight*; as alſo upon his *weeping ſore*, God, as if he were mov'd by his Prayers, his plea, and his tears, adds to his days fifteen years. And the text expreſly affirms this acceſſion to be the effect of his Prayers. For ſo we read v. 4th. *Then came the word of the Lord to Iſaiah, ſaying*; *Go, and ſay to Hezekiah, Thus ſaith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy Prayer, I have ſeen thy tears*: *behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years.* The decree of God, that he ſhould die, was not abſolute and unconditional; for then he muſt have died, and no Prayers, nor tears could have reſcued him: the prolonging of his life was the gift of God; for God ſaith expreſly, *I will add unto his days fifteen years.* But tho' it was the free gift of God, it was in return of *Hezekiah*'s Prayers; *I have heard his prayer, I have ſeen his tears*: *behold I will add unto his days fifteen years. Hezekiah* by his Prayer did not alter the purpoſe of God, who had before determin'd to prolong his life, upon his turning to him by Prayers and Tears; and who by his preſcience foreſaw, that he would ſo turn unto him:

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but *Hezekiah* by *turning his face to the wall, and* by *praying unto the Lord,* ſhew'd in himſelf thoſe diſpoſitions, upon the foreſight of which God had purpos'd to prolong his life. The meſſage of the Prophet, that he ſhould die of that ſickneſs, had it been peremptory, had been falſified by the event: a way therefore there was left to eſcape, tho' that way was not expreſs'd. It needed not to be plainly expreſs'd, becauſe *Hezekiah*, who was acquainted with the diſpenſations of Providence, and the methods of averting God's judgments, underſtood it without its being expreſs'd. This way *Hezekiah* took, and it prov'd ſucceſsful: without any change at all, the meſſage that he ſhould die, and his recovery after ſuch meſſage had been inconſiſtent; but a change being admitted on *Hezekiah*'s part, ſuch an one as brought him within the reach of God's mercy, there was no need of a change on God's part, who had always purpos'd to reſtore him to health upon his Prayer. God's immutability therefore doth not ſhut out the uſe of Prayer, but on the other ſide proves the neceſſity of Prayer. For if he hath ſteadily purpos'd to grant his favours only to thoſe who ask them, unleſs God were changeable, we cannot hope that he ſhould beſtow his bleſſings upon us without our asking.

BUT theſe objectors againſt the Profitableneſs of Prayer, when they are forc'd to give up the plea they made againſt it from God's unchangeableneſs, and to allow, that dependence upon God may be a proper qualification to recommend us to God's favour, may yet pretend to doubt, whether this dependence muſt neceſſarily be expreſs'd and evidenc'd by Prayer. For, ſay they, we may truſt in God, and yet not call upon him; yea rather, it is a ſign of our entire truſt and confidence, that we ſubmit our ſelves implicitely to his will, and do not trouble him with our requeſts: for if we are worthy of his favours, he will grant them, tho' we do not ask them; and if we be not worthy, he will not grant them, tho' we do. If we are worthy of his bleſſings, and are ſo humble and modeſt as not to ask them, we are for that reaſon the more worthy: and on the other ſide, if we are unworthy of his mercies, and yet are ſo arrogant, and immodeſt as to ask them, we are for that reaſon the more unworthy. Whether therefore we deem our ſelves worthy, or unworthy of the bleſſings of God, we had better ſilently reſign our ſelves to his good will and pleaſure, than importune him by Prayers, which are according to theſe men's opinion always unneceſſary, and may ſometimes be provoking.

NOW to this falſe reaſoning it may be thus anſwer'd; that if this dependence upon God means any thing, it muſt be to all intents and purpoſes the ſame thing, as a mental Prayer. A truſt in God, that he will ſupply our wants, implies a conſciouſneſs of our own inability, and an acknowledgment of his power and readineſs to aſſiſt us, and conſequently an expectance of relief from him, which make up the notion of Prayer. For Prayer doth not conſiſt either in the bending of our knees, or the ſervice of our lips, or the lifting up of our hands, or eyes to heaven; but in the elevation of our ſouls towards God. Theſe outward expreſſions of our inward thoughts are neceſſary in our publick, and often expedient in our private devotions; but they do not make up the eſſence of Prayer, which may truly and acceptably be perform'd, where theſe are wanting.

IF therefore the objectors do honeſtly and ſincerely mean by dependence upon God, what ſhould be meant by it, and what is generally underſtood

derſtood by it, they quarrel only about words, and not about things: they will not call that Prayer, which truly is Prayer; but tho' they ſpeak improperly, they think the ſame thing as we do, ſo far at leaſt as to admit the neceſſity of mental Prayer, tho' they diſpute the profitableneſs of vocal Prayer, or Prayer expreſs'd by words. Now we willingly grant them, that this is not neceſſary in regard to God, who knows our wants without our telling them; but it may be very uſeful to us, and is neceſſary to the generality of mankind, who cannot abſtract ſo far, as to exerciſe theſe pure ſpiritual acts of the ſoul, without ſome exterior helps to their devotion.

As to what they object, that if we are worthy of God's favours, he will grant them unask'd, this is frivolous; ſince in God's eſteem thoſe only are worthy, who do ask. And as to what they ſay, that if we are in the ſight of God unworthy, we ſhall not obtain, and therefore ask in vain; true indeed it is, that if we depended purely upon our worthineſs, we might have reaſon to deſpair of receiving, and therefore could never ask with faith: but if we believe in a good and gracious God, we do not depend upon our own worthineſs, but his grace and bounty; and if we are Chriſtians, we have the merits of our Saviour to plead againſt our demerits, and undeſervings. Whether therefore we think our ſelves worthy of God's favours, that is worthy according to that meaſure of worthineſs, which God requires in thoſe, to whom he is ready to diſpenſe his mercies, it is neceſſary, that we ask; becauſe asking is one thing requiſite to make us ſo far worthy: or whether we think our ſelves by reaſon of our ſins and demerits unworthy, there is yet room for our Prayer; becauſe what for our own unworthineſs we cannot hope, we may expect from the goodneſs of God, thro' the merits of Chriſt.

If God requires that we ſhould ask, it is a falſe pretence to modeſty, and even on the contrary an arrogant preſumption, not to ask; and thoſe, who ask in obedience to his command, have really and truly that humility and ſubmiſſion, which thoſe falſly pretend to, who expect God's bleſſings without asking. We conceive very groſly of God, if we think that our Prayers are troubleſome to him, as the requeſts of importunate beggars are to us; and tho' thoſe, who ſay nothing of their poverty to us may be more proper objects of our charity, than noiſy and clamorous ſuiters for it: yet it may be juſt with God to overlook the neceſſities of thoſe, who are above asking a ſupply; and to grant the requeſts of thoſe only, who with equal modeſty and aſſurance fly unto him for help in the time of need.

If we will proceed in this important affair not by our own ſhallow
reaſonings, which eaſily may, and often do deceive us, but by the plain
light of Revelation, which alone can certainly inſtruct us in the me-
thods of God's diſpenſations; we are thereby aſſur'd, that God *heareth* Pſal. 65. 2.
Prayer, and that therefore *unto* him *all fleſh* ought to *come*: that we
ought to be always attentive to him, who dealeth out to us both our
work, and our proviſions; for *as the eyes of ſervants look unto the hand* Pſal. 123. 2.
of their maſters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her miſtreſs: ſo our eyes ought to *wait upon the Lord our God, until that he*
have mercy upon us: that becauſe our *help cometh from the Lord, which* Pſal. 121. 1, 2.
made heaven and earth, therefore we ought to *lift up* our *eyes* to him
from whom *cometh our help*: that *the eyes of the Lord are upon the* Pſal. 34. 15.

righteous, to ſee their wants; *and his ears are open unto their cry*, to hear their ſupplications: that *the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth*: that *he will fulfil the deſire of them that fear him*: that *he alſo will hear their cry, and will ſave them*: that *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*: and that therefore no arguments taken from the Immutability of God, or from the Unworthineſs of men, or from any other reaſon, or rather falſe appearance of reaſon, do, or can prove, that Prayers are unavailable, and of no prevalency with God.

Pſal. 145. 18, 19.

Jam. 5. 16.

I HAVE, I am afraid, dwelt too long upon an objection, which I have reaſon to hope did not want to be ſo largely examin'd, and confuted. For as it is againſt the whole tenor of Scripture, a conſiderable part of which, and particularly the book of *Pſalms*, conſiſts of Prayers offer'd to God; and therefore ſuppoſes the Profitableneſs of Prayer to be in it ſelf evident without proof: ſo I hope your own experience hath in many inſtances, and upon many occaſions, ſhewn the weakneſs, and vanity of this objection.

YOUR Prayers for ſpiritual graces, and temporal bleſſings; for the calling down God's mercies, and the averting his judgments; your Prayers for your ſelves, and your interceſſions for others; your devotions pour'd forth before God in the privacy of your retirements, and your more ſolemn addreſſes to heaven in the aſſembly of the Saints; your conſtant ſtated returns of Prayer at ſet times of the year, the month, the week, and the day, and your occaſional devotions according to the preſent exigency of your ſeveral wants and neceſſities either of body, or of ſoul; your Prayers to God, that he would ſtop an impending evil, or remove a preſſing calamity; that he would give you a ſpeedy iſſue out of an unſupportable trouble, or patience under it, to make it eaſie and ſupportable; all theſe ſeveral ſorts and kinds of Prayer, I doubt not, but you have frequently offer'd to God, and frequently found effectual: that you have felt in your own breaſts a ſenſible joy and complacency in pouring forth your ſupplications; a comfortable aſſurance, that they would be graciouſly receiv'd; and an entire ſatisfaction and conviction of mind, that the good things you have after ſuch Prayers receiv'd, and the evil things you have eſcap'd and got rid of, have been the conſequence of ſuch Prayers; that the bleſſings you have pray'd for, and the calamities you have pray'd againſt, have been beſtow'd on you, or averted from you, in ſuch a manner, that you have plainly perceiv'd the hand of God in reaching forth the one, and turning aſide the other; that the conveyance of ſuch bleſſings to you, and the removal of ſuch evils from you hath been ſo little accountable for by any viſible cauſes, that you could not give your ſelf any ſatisfactory account, how you came to receive the one, or to avoid the other, without recurring to the inviſible, but yet evident, interpoſition of the ſupreme Author and Diſpoſer of all things; that therefore no falſe reaſoning is able to ſhake your aſſurance of the Uſefulneſs of Prayer, which is built upon ſo ſure, ſo frequent, ſo infallible experience; that you are not to be diſputed out of what you know and feel; that tho' you were not able to anſwer all the cavils of impertinent, and blaſphemous objectors againſt the Uſe of Prayer, you could never be driven from a firm and ſteady belief, that thoſe Prayers are prevalent with God, which you have often experimentally found to have prevail'd with him; that therefore your aſſurance in this point being built upon ſtrong foundations, to wit, the infinite goodneſs of God, which diſpoſes him to grant the petitions of his ſervants; the unlimited power of the ſame good God, which enables him to fulfil all their deſires; as alſo his truth and veracity, which make it impoſſible for him not to keep the promiſes, which he hath made, of giving to thoſe that ask: your aſſurance, I ſay, of the Uſefulneſs of Prayer being built upon theſe firm foundations, and farther ſtrengthned by the teſtimony of the Saints of God in all ages, who have found their Prayers to have been prevalent with God, for the drawing down on themſelves, or others, the greateſt bleſſings; as alſo by the teſtimony of thoſe, who being themſelves unbelievers, or ſinners, have yet acknowledg'd the benefit, which they have found by the Prayers of the faithful, and righteous; as alſo by the ſtill much more uncontrovertible proof taken from your own experience; this aſſurance, I ſay, ſo founded, and ſo ſtrengthned, having ſo firm ground to ſtand upon, and ſo ſtrong ſupports to uphold it, is not to be ſhaken by any wind of contrary doctrine, *by the ſleight of men, and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lie in wait to deceive* the unwary and unſtable.

We have examin'd the objections of thoſe, who would overthrow this duty, and have not been afraid to give them their full force and weight. We have perhaps ſaid for them more, than they do, or can ſay for themſelves. We have poſſibly repreſented their objections to more advantage, than they uſually manage them; and have ſaid not only what is, but what can be ſaid with any ſhew of reaſon againſt this duty. For there is no need of diſſembling the weight of ſuch objections, which being brought to the ballance of the Sanctuary, and examin'd by the teſt of Scripture, or the ſtandard of unprejudic'd reaſon, muſt needs prove light.

The more nicely or ſcrupulouſly we examine the grounds of this or of any other religious duty, the more fully we ſhall be convinc'd of the reaſonableneſs of it. Weak and infirm minds, who uſe to take up duties upon truſt and without trial, are too apt, when they hear any thing that looks plauſible, urg'd againſt the neceſſity of ſuch duties, to be eaſily led away; and being not fore-arm'd againſt the artifices of ungodly men and cunning deceivers, to be miſled by the falſe colours, and ſpecious ſhew of arguments. Whereas if they had before impartially conſider'd the reaſons of ſuch duties, and the emptineſs of ſuch cavils, as are advanc'd againſt them, they would have been ſecure againſt the wiles of thoſe, who, being themſelves beguil'd by Satan, or their own luſts, make it their buſineſs to beguile others.

I am ſenſible, that in ſuch auditories as theſe we ſhould not ſtart needleſs objections, but point out plain duties, and enforce them on your practice. But in ſuch a licentious age as this, when the plaineſt duties are argu'd againſt; when reaſon is ~~ſet up~~ againſt Scripture; when wicked men are not content, with their forefathers, to neglect chriſtian duties, but to defend their neglect, and pretend to overthrow the obligations of Religion and Morality by a falſe ſhew of reaſon and argument; to ſet the attributes of God at variance; to deny him his due reverence, under colour of paying him a greater; and to make his unchangeableneſs a plauſible pretence for their not calling upon him; I think it not improper to wreſt ſuch arms as theſe, imploy'd for the deſtruction of ſouls, out of the enemies hands; and to ſhew, that thoſe very reaſons, which they advance againſt the Uſefulneſs of Prayer, are ſtrong and undeniable proofs of its being profitable.

It remains only, that being upon mature deliberation, and impartial examining the merits of the cauſe, fully convinc'd of the reaſonableneſs of this duty, we apply our ſelves to a conſcientious aud faithful diſcharge of it: that being thoroughly perſwaded of the Profitableneſs of Prayer, we do not ſo far overlook our own intereſt, as by neglect of Prayer to loſe thoſe many and unſpeakable advantages, which we may expect from it; but that by praying to God frequently, humbly, and fervently, we ſhould be able to give the beſt, the ſhorteſt, and fulleſt proof of the Uſefulneſs of Prayer from our own experience.

SERMON III.

The Profitableneſs of Prayer.

JOB XXI. 15.

What profit ſhould we have, if we pray unto him?

The ſecond Sermon on this Text.

THESE words, I told you, are an objection of bold, ungodly, and profane men againſt the duty of Prayer. I undertook to anſwer this objection, and to defend this weighty, neceſſary, and important duty. The ſtreſs of the argument here urg'd againſt Prayer is taken from its unprofitableneſs; it doth not procure the advantages which might be expected from it, and therefore, ſay the objectors, it ought to be laid aſide. I hinted to you an anſwer, that might be made to this objection, from the right of God to require this duty, whether it turn'd to our account, or not; but I did not inſiſt upon this, but allow'd the objection to be good, if it could be made out, that Prayer is unprofitable. This the objectors would prove either from reaſon, or from experience: they would either prove from reaſon, that God cannot be prevail'd upon by Prayer; or from experience, that he is not. Their proofs from reaſon I have fairly examin'd, and I think fully confuted. I have ſhew'd, that the hearing of Prayer neceſſarily reſults from ſome of the attributes of God, and therefore cannot be inconſiſtent with any: I have ſhew'd particularly, that it is not repugnant to the Immutability of God; that it argues no imperfection, no inſtability, no change in God to be prevail'd on by Prayer: that tho' change of reſolution in men upon the importunity of others may be a ſign of weakneſs, or unconſtancy, or imprudence in them; yet that God may anſwer the requeſts of men, without altering his purpoſes; and that when he doth anſwer their requeſts, there is no change in him, but all the change is in men. I have made this out by proofs from Reaſon, and by examples from Scripture; I have endeavour'd to reconcile theſe attributes of God, which the objectors againſt Prayer would ſet at variance; and hope I have compaſs'd what I aim'd at. I have alſo ſhewn, that dependence upon God either includes in it Prayer to him, and then if that dependence be admitted by the objectors, as neceſſary to entitle us to Gods favours, Prayer alſo muſt be admitted; or that if the dependence, they admit, doth not include Prayer, it is not ſufficient to give us a good title to God's bleſſings. I have farther ſhewn, that no one may ſo far preſume upon his own worthineſs, as to expect God's bleſſings without asking; becauſe God judges none worthy of his favours, but what do ask: and that on the other ſide, no one ought ſo far to diſtruſt his own worthineſs, as not to ask; becauſe our hopes of receiving are not built upon our own worthineſs, but upon the goodneſs of God, and the merits of Chriſt. I have laſtly pointed out to you a ſhorter, and fuller, and eaſier way of confuting the objections of bold, and gain-ſaying men, by proving the falſhood and vanity of them from your own experience.

But here the objectors think they have an advantage againſt us; and as we plead experience for the uſefulneſs of Prayer, ſo they plead experience againſt its being profitable. For tho' ſometimes they urge againſt us arguments taken from the unchangeableneſs of God, in order to prove that he cannot be prevail'd on by Prayer; yet being beat out of this hold, they fly to another, and tell us, that whether it be plain or not, that he cannot be wrought upon, it is at leaſt evident that he is not. For, ſay they, Prayer is not look'd upon by God, and therefore it is to no purpoſe us'd by men: if men pray, God doth not regard their Prayers, and therefore it is in vain for them to pray any longer. If we enquire farther of theſe men, how they know that God regardeth not our Prayers, their anſwer can be no other but this; the bleſſings we pray for are not granted; the evils we pray againſt are not remov'd; and therefore we may well reckon that our Prayers are diſregarded. This I take to be the utmoſt ſtrength of the objection taken from experience, which if more narrowly ſifted, and thoroughly examin'd, will, I think, prove more weak and contemptible than the former. For to make this a good objection there are ſeveral things ſuppos'd, of which if any one ſhould fail, this argument againſt Prayer will not be concluſive; and if all ſhould upon examination be found falſe, it will then appear very frivolous.

For to make this a convincing argument againſt Prayer, it muſt be ſuppos'd,

Firſt, That becauſe God hath not yet regarded our Prayers, therefore for the future he will not.

Secondly, That becauſe God hath not regarded ſome Prayers, therefore he will regard none.

Thirdly, That becauſe God doth not anſwer the particular requeſts of ſuch as pray unto him, therefore he doth not regard their Prayers.

All theſe things, I ſay, muſt be ſuppos'd true to make this a good objection againſt the Profitableneſs of Prayer; but the contrary of each of theſe is true, and therefore it is a bad one. For

I. Those very Prayers, which God hath not yet anſwer'd, he may regard for the future; ſo that it is no argument againſt Praying, that God hath not yet heard our Prayers.

II. Tho' God doth not regard ſome Prayers, he may regard others; ſo that God's diſregard of ſome is no argument for men's neglect of all.

III. Tho' God doth not grant the particular requeſts of ſuch as pray, he he may yet regard their Prayers; ſo that God's denial of what men requeſt is no argument againſt Prayer.

FOR if either the ſame Prayers repeated, or other better Prayers ſubſtituted in their room, do prevail with God to grant our requeſts; or if our Prayers may be of uſe to us, and we reap conſiderable advantages from them, tho' our particular requeſts are not granted; if any one of theſe things can be prov'd, the objection will be of no force; but if all theſe can be prov'd, the objection will ſtill appear more empty and frivolous. I will endeavour therefore to prove them all, that having clear'd this neceſſary duty from all cavils, and all appearance of argument againſt it, I may at laſt more ſtrongly, and more effectually, recommend it to your practice.

Firſt, THEN it is to be prov'd, that thoſe very Prayers which God hath not yet heard, he may vouchſafe to hear upon their being repeated; ſo that it is no argument againſt our going on to pray, that God hath not yet heard our Prayers.

WERE Prayer of that intrinſick value in it ſelf, that it did for its own ſake merit God's favour, we might then, upon our paying down the price, of right challenge the benefit of the purchaſe; or had God any where promis'd, that upon our ſincere performance of this duty he would immediately pour down his bleſſings upon us, then our Prayers would have, tho' not in themſelves, and for their own ſakes, yet by virtue of ſuch promiſe, a right to his immediate regard; and he could not deny our requeſts, becauſe he could not deny himſelf. But ſince neither can Prayer boaſt of any ſuch worth, nor we plead any ſuch promiſe; ſince a preſent bleſſing upon our Prayers, is neither originally due to us from God's juſtice, nor becomes due to us from his veracity; the delay of his mercies can be no argument of a peremptory denial; and tho' our firſt attempt upon Heaven may prove ſucceſsleſs, we have no reaſon preſently to deſpond. No one can think that we have a right to the bleſſings of God, purely becauſe we once aſk them. He who petitions for any thing, by his very petitioning allows it to be a matter of mere favour and grace; and there is a great difference between begging an alms and ſuing for a debt.

WHATEVER we have, we owe it to the mere bounty and infinite goodneſs of God; and ſurely our having receiv'd all we enjoy from him, gives us no title to expect whatever we are farther diſpos'd to aſk of him. *Who hath firſt given to him, and it ſhall be recompenſed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things*: of him they are, as the original Author and Creator; through him, as the giver and conveyer of them to us; and to him they are, to his honour, for his uſe, and in his diſpoſal; and no farther or longer ours, than as he is pleas'd in mercy, not in juſtice, as a free gift, not as a debt, to diſpence them to us. Be we in our own fond opinions never ſo deſerving, yet we cannot plead merit with God; as our ſins do him no harm, ſo our righteouſneſs doth him no good; as thoſe thro' his infinite mercy will not exclude us from all hopes of his favour, ſo neither will our pretended virtues give us any certain and juſt title to receive of him what we aſk. *If thou be righteous*, ſaith Job, *what giveſt thou him? or what receiveth he at thy hand? Thy wickedneſs may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteouſneſs may profit the ſon of man. Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wiſe may be profitable unto himſelf?*

Rom. 11. 35, 36.

Job 35. 7, 8.

c. 22. 2, 3.

ſelf? Is it any pleaſure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is *it gain to him, that thou makeſt thy ways perfect?* ſaith the ſame elegant Writer; Job 22. 5. nay rather, *Is not* our *wickedneſs great, and* are not *our iniquities infinite?* So that if righteouſneſs were a valid plea at the throne of God for the immediate obtaining our requeſts, yet it is a plea that none of us can make; tho' it were in it ſelf ſuch a title as could not be diſputed, yet it is a title that we can never make out to be ours.

ALL our hopes therefore of having our requeſts granted muſt be built upon the promiſes of God; for what he has promis'd, that he is able and ready to perform. But we can no where find any ſuch promiſe, that whatever we ask of God, that he will immediately grant unto us; that the bleſſings we pray for ſhall be the reſult of our firſt Prayers, or that with God there is no room for ſecond requeſts, and reiterated addreſſes. Chriſt hath indeed forbid us to uſe vain repetitions, when we pray; yet he hath taught us, that to renew the ſame requeſts will not be in vain: for tho' we may not think that we ſhall be heard for our much ſpeaking, yet we are aſſur'd, that we ſhall be heard for our frequent asking. Vain repetitions, ſuch as the Heathen us'd, are therefore forbid by Chriſt, becauſe they are built upon an erroneous and blaſphemous ſuppoſition, that Prayers are therefore to be repeated, that he, to whom they are addreſs'd, may by their being often inculcated, better underſtand them, and be more fully inform'd of the wants of Mat. 6. 8. thoſe, who apply themſelves unto him. *Be not ye therefore like unto them,* ſaith Chriſt, *for your Father knoweth what things you have need of, before ye ask him.* But tho' babling be condemn'd, importunity is not; tho' we may not hope by vain repetitions better to inform God, yet we may hope by reiterated ſupplications more effectually to prevail upon him.

THE relenting of the unjuſt Judge ſtands recorded in Scripture, as a plain inſtance of the irreſiſtible force of perſeverance in Prayer. He Luc. 18. 2. *neither feared God, nor regarded man*; neither religion, nor reputation had any hold upon him; neither the condition of the diſtreſs'd petitioner, who was a widow, nor the juſtice of her cauſe, who deſir'd only to be aveng'd of her adverſary, mov'd any compaſſion in him; but her application, her diligence, her continued addreſſes, her unwea- v. 4, 5. ried importunity, were motives not to be withſtood. *He would not for a while,* ſaith the Parable, *but afterward he ſaid within himſelf: tho' I fear not God, nor regard man; yet becauſe this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, leſt by her continual coming ſhe weary me.* Now tho' it were blaſphemy to think that God acts upon the ſame motives, as an unjuſt Judge; yet our Saviour hath warranted us to conclude, that our perſeverance in Prayer ſhall, with reſpect to God, work the ſame effect. For it is expreſly ſaid, that our Saviour ſpoke the parable v. 1. to his diſciples *to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint*: and in his application of the ſeveral parts of it, God who is call'd upon in Prayer, anſwers to the Judge who is importun'd; the elect, to the widow; their crying day and night, to her unwearied petitions; God's deferring for ſome time to avenge them, to the Judge's putting off for a while the avenging of her; and God's avenging them at laſt, to his avenging her. For thus doth our Saviour particularly point out the exact correſpondence of the Parable with the doctrine, which v. 6, 7, 8. he deduc'd from it: *And the Lord ſaid, hear what the unjuſt Judge*

ſaith.

ſaith: And ſhall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him, tho' he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them ſpeedily. It muſt be acknowledg'd that the reaſons, why importunity prevails with men, do not hold, when they are apply'd to God. Men may not attend to our firſt addreſſes, or may not be able immediately to anſwer them; they may not rightly underſtand what we aſk upon our firſt application, or may not have it in their power ſpeedily to help us; they may make themſelves ſport with our wants, and therefore may be ſlow to ſupply them; they may defer their ſuccours out of a vain oſtentation of power, and pleaſe themſelves in the dependence of their ſupplicants; they may out of humour or wantonneſs love to be often aſk'd, and take delight in the cries and neceſſities of their poor miſerable votaries; what they do not grant at firſt out of the generoſity of their nature, they may grant at laſt out of mere impatience; they may not be able to bear the troubleſome clamours of an importunate ſuitor, and may, with the unjuſt Judge, comply with his deſires, not out of compaſſion, but purely for the love of eaſe. But God is not deaf to our firſt requeſts, that we ſhould be forc'd to renew them; nor is he limited in his power, that he ſhould not be able immediately to anſwer them; he wants not to have our Prayers repeated, that he may be more fully inform'd of our condition; nor doth he ſuſpend his ſuccours, becauſe at preſent it is not in his power to aſſiſt us; he takes no pleaſure in the miſery of his creatures, that he ſhould defer their relief; nor do our acknowledgements add any thing to him, that he ſhould glory in our dependence; he is not a fond Being, whoſe bowels are to be melted by compaſſionate complaints; nor a frail Being, to be tir'd into compliance by mere force of aſſiduous and importunate application.

THE worſhippers of *Baal may call upon the name of* their God, *from morning until noon, ſaying, ô Baal hear us*: *and* yet *there* may be *no voice, nor any that anſwers*: they may be adviſ'd to *cry aloud,* becauſe the God, whom they worſhip, may be *talking, or purſuing, or in a journey, or aſleep, and* may want to *be awak'd*; and in compliance with this advice, they may *cry aloud, and cut themſelves with knives and lancers, till the blood guſhes out*, that their God may be mov'd, if not by their cries and tears, yet at leaſt by their wounds, and the ſhedding of their blood; and yet it may ſtill happen, that after all theſe violent methods of working upon their God, *there may* be *neither voice, nor any to anſwer, nor any that regardeth.* But *our rock is not as their rock*; our God is not as their God: *he that keepeth Iſrael neither ſlumbers, nor ſleeps*: he is not diverted by pleaſure, nor diſtracted by care, that he ſhould not be at leiſure to hearken to our requeſts: he is a God of compaſſion, and takes no delight in tormenting his creatures by cruel delays; he is a God of infinite wiſdom, who requires no time to deliberate about the juſtice and reaſonableneſs of our requeſts; he is a God of infinite power, who wants no ability to compaſs whatever he pleaſes, and to grant without delay whatever we aſk.

1 Kings 18. 26.

Deut. 32.31.

Pſal. 121.3.

WHY then, may the objectors ſay, ſhould our repeated Prayers be more prevalent than our firſt? What reaſon can we form to our ſelves, or what reaſon can any one elſe aſſign to us, why God, whoſe wiſdom, power, and goodneſs are always the ſame, ſhould not always be equally ready to grant the ſame requeſts? Why may we not certainly conclude, that if God hears not our Prayers at firſt, he will go on to ſtop his ears againſt them? And ſince it is acknowledg'd, that the reaſons why importunity prevails with men, do not hold in reference to God, what other reaſons can be brought to ſhew, that importunity will be of any efficacy with him?

To this enquiry, we need not be over-curious to give an anſwer; the reaſons of God's procedure, we may not be able to reach; *his ways are not as our ways,* and therefore are not to be accounted for upon the ſame principles: it is enough for us that Chriſt, who knoweth the ſecret counſels of God, that he *who is in the boſom of the Father*, and hath declar'd unto us the will of the Father, hath in his Goſpel plainly taught us, that thus God doth, and thus he will proceed. If God is pleas'd to grant our requeſts upon their being repeated, we have reaſon thankfully to accept of his mercy, and cannot without impiety expoſtulate with him for not granting them ſooner; God is pleas'd to take this method in diſpenſing his favours; this method therefore, whether we can account for it, or not, is highly juſt, wiſe, and reaſonable.

But if we do with holy reverence ſearch into the reaſons of God's dealing with men; if, not to ſatisfie our vain curioſity, but to confirm our faith in him, and to ſtrengthen our ſelves in our duty, we do examine why God ſhould rather grant our repeated, than our firſt petitions, it will be eaſie to point out, tho' not perhaps the true, yet very juſt grounds for this procedure. For tho' frequency of Prayer may be of no efficacy to diſpoſe God to be more gracious, yet it may be of great uſe to diſpoſe us to be more proper objects of his grace; tho' it can make no change in God, ſo that he ſhould become more propitious; yet it may work that change in us, which is neceſſary to render us more worthy of his mercies. For Prayers in themſelves have no immediate effect upon God, by working any change in him, who is unchangeable, and therefore cannot be ſuppos'd to have any greater efficacy by being often repeated; but they are upon this account effectual, becauſe they create in us thoſe heavenly diſpoſitions of mind, which are requiſite to prepare us for God's bleſſings; and conſequently the more frequent they are, the more they may work in us that devout, and ſubmiſſive temper of ſoul; and for that reaſon be the more effectual.

The longer we wait for a deliverance, the larger field we ſhall have to exerciſe our patience in; the more preſſing our wants are, and the longer it is before they are ſupplied, the more fervent our Prayers will be; the delay of our hopes will teach us to mortifie our deſires, and to ſubmit our wills to the good pleaſure of God: to pray on with all perſeverance, tho' our Prayers have not yet been heard; to be ſecure of thoſe bleſſings which are yet far remov'd from our view; to build on promiſes againſt our experience, and to believe in hope againſt hope, are ſignal teſtimonies of an entire confidence, and unſhaken truſt in the divine goodneſs: when we have for a long time trembled under the apprehenſion of God's terrible judgments, we ſhall be more ſenſibly ſtruck with a ſudden breaking forth of mercy, and ſhall ſet a greater value upon thoſe bleſſings, which we have, as it were, wreſtled for with God, by inceſſant Prayers, repeated acts of devotion, and an unwearied courſe of religious application. What we attain eaſily, what coſts us no pains to acquire, what is purchas'd without any difficulty, that we are too apt to undervalue, and to ſet a rate upon it, not according to its own intrinſick worth, but according to the price of its acquiſition. It may therefore be juſt in God to raiſe our eſteem of his bleſſings, to ſhew the value of his mercies, and to guard againſt their being vile and cheap in our opinions, by prolonging the grant of them, and with-holding them from us, that by buying them, as it were, at a greater rate, we may the more eſteem them, not only in regard of their own proper worth, which is one and the ſame, whether they are granted ſooner or later, but alſo in reſpect of the pains we took, and the diligence we us'd to attain them.

Were the mercies of God pour'd forth to us upon our firſt application to him for them, it would look as if God could not deny us, without impeachment of his juſtice or mercy: but when God by deferring to grant the bleſſings we ask for, neceſſitates us to ask again, by the denial he ſhews, that we cannot demand them; and by his granting them upon our renew'd petitions, he further ſhews, that what he can in juſtice and without derogation to his goodneſs with-hold, that he in mercy vouchſafes to grant. When all the Prayers we offer up to God are without delay granted; when the bleſſings we pray for, are forthwith diſpens'd to us, or the evils we pray againſt, immediately remov'd, we are too apt to grow proud, and to think our ſelves favourites of Heaven; we look out for ſome reaſons, why God ſhould be ſo gracious to us above others; and we eaſily flatter our ſelves, that he ſeeth in us ſome excellency above what he perceives in other men, which diſpoſes him to be ſo diſtinguiſhing in his mercies to us; we judge that God proportions his diſpenſations to our merits, and that we deſerve well of him, becauſe he deals ſo well with us: to prevent therefore this vain and proud conceit, to give us low and juſt opinions of our ſelves, to make deep impreſſions of humility upon our ſouls, God is pleas'd rather to *ſend us away empty*, that we ſhould continue humble, than to *fill us with good things*, leſt with *Jeſhurun*, being *waxed fat* on a ſudden, we ſhould *kick*; leſt we ſhould preſume upon God who was ſo indulgent to us, *and lightly eſteem the rock of our ſalvation*; and inſtead of being thankful for his mercies, ſhould grow proud of our own merits; and in the words of the Prophet *Habakkuk*, ſhould *ſacrifice unto* our *net, and burn incenſe unto* our *drag*; as if *by them* our *portion was fat, and* by reaſon of them our *meat plenteous*. Deut. 32.15.

A Temporal bleſſing would be dearly bought at the expence of our ſpiritual welfare; and if God ſeeth that an immediate grant of the one, would be prejudicial to the other, it is an inſtance of great mercy that he defers to a longer time the anſwering our petitions. Theſe are the graces which God's holy Spirit worketh in his Saints, when he defers for ſome time the grant of thoſe bleſſings, which are reſerv'd in ſtore for them; this is the uſe we ought to make of God's deferring to hear our Prayers; theſe the reaſons we may give our ſelves, why God ſhould not vouchſafe thoſe mercies at our firſt asking, which he will not deny us upon our repeated requeſts. We have a ſure promiſe that our petitions ſhall at laſt be heard, and this is a firm foundation for perſeverance: we have no promiſe that our firſt addreſſes ſhall be accepted, and therefore the failure of thoſe can be no reaſon, why we ſhould deſiſt. There can be no juſt grounds for our diſcouragement upon the non-acceptance of our firſt addreſſes, or for our too haſty concluding thence, that our reiterated Prayers will meet with the ſame repulſe, becauſe we are aſſur'd from many and ſignal inſtances, that this is the uſual method of God's providence, and that his Saints in all ages have gain'd that by importunity and perſeverance, which without inceſſant Prayers they have not been able to obtain.

In the account which *Moſes* gives of *Jacob*'s wreſtling with the Angel, in order to force, as it were, a bleſſing from him, the unwearied importunity, which it becomes us to uſe in our Prayers to God, is aptly repreſented to us by the long continuance of the conteſt. Gen. 32. 24. *Jacob was left alone, and there wreſtled a man with him until the breaking of the day.* The repulſe, which good men often meet with in their addreſſes to heaven, is pictur'd out to us, by the hurt *Jacob* receiv'd in the hollow of his thigh, which was ſufficient to diſcourage him from making any farther ſtruggle; the difficulty God finds in reſiſting the repeated requeſts of his ſupplicants, is intimated by the Angel's deſire to *Jacob*, v. 26. that after he had ſtrove ſo long, he would at laſt deſiſt: *Let me go*, ſaith he, *for the day breaketh*: the unſhaken perſeverance we ought on theſe occaſions to uſe, is taught us in *Jacob*'s reply to the Angel's deſire; *I will not let thee go, except thou bleſs me.* And laſtly, the never-failing prevalence of ſuch reiterated Prayers is ſet forth by the ſucceſs of this long conteſt, v. 28. and the bleſſing which *Jacob* thereby extorted: *And he ſaid, Thy name ſhall be call'd no more Jacob, but Iſrael; for as a Prince haſt thou power with God, and with men, and haſt prevail'd with God, and with men*, that is, with God, and with Angels: for that he, who is in *Geneſis* call'd a man, was an Angel, appears from the Prophet *Hoſea*, c. 12. 3. where the victory of *Jacob* is thus expreſs'd: *By his ſtrength he had power with God; yea, he had power over the Angel*, and prevail'd; he had ſtrength with God, the original Author, he had power over the Angel, the immediate conveyer, of the bleſſing he receiv'd.

Great therefore is the prevalency of earneſt and continu'd Prayer, which conquers the ſtrength and activity of an Angel of God; yea, irreſiſtible is the force of importunity, which hath power over the Almighty. Nor ſhall we be ſurpriz'd, that *Jacob* was forc'd to wreſtle thus with God, before he could obtain the deſir'd bleſſing, when we conſider, that our Saviour himſelf, the beloved of the Father, is repreſented to us in Scripture, repeating the ſame requeſts, and, with reiterated application, renewing the ſame Prayer. For thus we read, *Matt.* 26. *v.* 39. that Chriſt *fell on his face, and pray'd, ſaying, O my Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me.* And then v. 42. *He went away again the ſecond time, and pray'd, ſaying, O my Father, if this cup may not paſs away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.* And yet farther, v. 44. *He left them, and went away again, and pray'd the third time, ſaying the ſame words.*

Now doth Chriſt, the well-beloved, the firſt-born, the only-begotten, the Son of God after a more peculiar and excellent manner, thus earneſtly, thus frequently, thus importunately renew the ſame requeſt to his Father; and do we, who are at beſt the ſons of God but by adoption only, we, his diſobedient, and rebellious ſons, we, who have no other title to be call'd ſons than thro' Chriſt; we, who have no other plea to make at the throne of grace than the merits of Chriſt, do we hope that our firſt, our faint, and imperfect Prayers ſhould receive a ſpeedy and immediate anſwer? Chriſt hath here ſet us a ſure and unerring pattern: he was pleas'd for our inſtruction to reinforce his moſt ardent Prayers for the removal of that cup, which after all his continu'd ſupplications was not to be paſs'd; that we might learn from him to pray without ceaſing to his and our Father, for the obtaining his marvellous, Gal. 4. 6. and undeſerv'd mercies. If then we *are* the true *ſons* of God, *God* will *ſend forth the Spirit of his ſon into* our *hearts*, *crying*, and repeating that cry, *Abba, Father.*

Nay yet farther, Chriſt is repreſented as perpetually interceding for us, and in our behalf, at the throne of God; and thoſe mercies certainly muſt be worth our repeated Prayers, which are worth Chriſt's continual interceſſion. Chriſt is that Angel we read of in the *Revelations*, who *came and ſtood at the altar, having a golden cenſer*; and Rev. 8. 3. *there was given unto him much incenſe, that he ſhould offer it with the prayers of all the ſaints, upon the golden altar, which was before the throne.* His offering is perpetual, continu'd, and uninterrupted; the Prayers therefore of the Saints, which are the ſubject and matter of this oblation, and which are acceptable to God only by Jeſus Chriſt, ought alſo to be offer'd by us without wearineſs, or interruption. He intercedes for us in the ſtrength of his own merits, and righteouſneſs; he intercedes not after a ſervile and precarious, but after an authoritative and efficacious manner: he intercedes in vertue of his meritorious death, which gives him a right and title to the bleſſings, which he asks; and yet his interceſſion thus founded, thus ſupported, thus powerful, is, to make it more prevalent, without intermiſſion. And ſhall we ſinful duſt and aſhes; we, who have no merits or righteouſneſs of our own to plead for us; we, who have great demerits and iniquities to plead againſt us; we, who cannot approach to God, nor preſume to appear before him, but under the cover and protection of Chriſt's merits; we, who dare not addreſs our ſelves to the Father in our own names, but only in the name of Chriſt, be ſo hardy as to imagine that our impotent, our worthleſs, our imperfect Prayers, ſhall, without any farther delay, without continuing and perſevering in them, be accepted?

The holy Apoſtle St. *Paul* faithfully copied the pattern, which our Saviour here ſet him, and having *a thorn given him in the fleſh, the* 2 Cor. 12. 7, 8. *meſſenger of Satan, beſought the Lord thrice,* as the Lord before, upon a like occaſion, had beſought the Father thrice, *that it might depart from* him. And our Lord in anſwer to his third Prayer *ſaid, My* v. 9. *Grace is ſufficient for thee, for my ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs.* None, we ſee, have been ſo dear unto God, who have not found it neceſſary to renew their petitions to him for the bleſſings they have wanted; and to our comfort we alſo find, that thoſe, who have been leſs worthy of God's favours, which is moſt likely to be our caſe, have by importunity at laſt prevail'd. When the *Canaanitiſh woman cried* Mat. 15. 22. *unto* our Saviour, *ſaying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David,* 'tis ſaid, that *he anſwer'd her not a word.* She, not at all diſcourag'd v. 23. with this his reſolv'd ſilence, ſtill purſues him with her cries; ſo that the *diſciples came and beſought him, ſaying, ſend her away, for ſhe crieth after us.* This ſollicitation of the woman, and interceſſion of the diſciples, did not yet prevail upon him to extend his mercy to one, who was without the reach of his commiſſion: *I am not ſent,* ſaith he, v. 24. *but to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael.* This anſwer, which look'd like a poſitive repulſe, and flat denial of her ſuit, did not cauſe her in the leaſt to deſpond; for upon this *ſhe came and worſhipped him, ſaying,* v. 25. *Lord help me.* But this adoration, which ſhe might hope would ſoften him into a compliance, drew from him a ſeemingly cruel and bitter anſwer: *he anſwer'd and ſaid, It is not meet to take the childrens bread,* v. 26. *and to caſt it to dogs.* From this anſwer, in the ſound of it peremptory and deciſive againſt her, ſhe drew matter of comfort, and hope: *And* v. 27. *ſhe ſaid, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs, which fall from their maſters table.* Againſt ſuch an unſhaken faith, ſuch an undaunted re-

reſolution, ſuch a lively hope, ſuch a profound humility, ſuch an unwearied importunity, the compaſſionate Jeſus could no longer hold out: Mat. 15.28. *Then Jeſus anſwer'd and ſaid unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee, even as thou wilt.*

To ſum up what hath been ſaid: It is urg'd, that becauſe God doth not at firſt regard our Prayers, therefore he will not. To this it hath been replied, that the ſame Prayers, which God doth not anſwer at firſt, he may anſwer upon their being repeated; that Prayer doth not for its own ſake deſerve an immediate grant, and therefore that it is not unjuſt in God to defer it; that God has no where promis'd to hear our firſt Prayers, and that therefore it is no ways repugnant to his veracity, to deny us; that it depends upon his free bounty, whether he will grant our requeſts, or not; and that therefore we ought to adore his goodneſs, if he vouchſafes, upon our being inſtant in Prayer, to hear us; that there may be many reaſons, why God ſhould not hear our firſt Prayers, which we may not be able to diſcover; that there are many reaſons, why he ſhould do ſo, which we are able to aſſign; that by ſuch delay of his mercies, our patience is exercis'd, our deſires mortified, our faith tried, our humility encreas'd, our truſt in God ſhewn, our ſubmiſſion to his will made manifeſt, our value for his mercies heightned, and our entire dependence upon his goodneſs and bounty clearly demonſtrated; that we cannot, from the rejection of our firſt Prayers, deſpair of the acceptance of our renew'd addreſſes, becauſe we have in holy Scripture frequent inſtances of the power and efficacy of reiterated Prayers; that the greateſt favourites of heaven have not been heard at their firſt requeſts, and that the moſt unworthy ſupplicants have been heard for their importunity; that ſince therefore there are ſo good grounds, why God out of mercy ſhould for ſome time diſcover no regard to thoſe Prayers, which he will be ſure, out of the ſame mercy at laſt to accept, God's diſregard of our Prayers at preſent, is no good argument, why we ſhould leave off to pray; which was the truth I deſign'd to prove, in order to recommend Perſeverance in Prayer more effectually to your practice.

SER-

SERMON IV.

The Profitableneſs of Prayer.

JOB XXI. 15.

What profit ſhould we have, if we pray unto him?

The third Sermon on this Text.

PRAYER is ſo weighty, ſo neceſſary, and ſo advantageous a duty, that we cannot take too much pains to eſtabliſh it upon the firmeſt grounds, and to ſettle it upon its true foundations: it is alſo ſo great an honour and privilege to miſerable and precarious creatures, to converſe with their all-mighty, all-gracious, and all-ſufficient Creator, that we cannot be too jealous of the deſigns of ſuch men, who would rob us of it. In defence therefore of this important duty, and this ſingular privilege, I have undertook to examine and anſwer the objections of profane men againſt Prayer, taken from the pretended Unprofitableneſs of it. Theſe I told you were drawn, ſome from reaſon, others from experience: thoſe from reaſon I have fully anſwer'd; thoſe from experience I have entred upon, but have not yet thoroughly diſpatch'd. For tho' I have ſaid all that needs be ſaid, to ſhew the vanity of this objection, yet I have not yet ſaid all that may be ſaid unto it: tho' by what I have already ſaid, I have ſhewn the objection to be inconcluſive, yet it remains that I ſhould ſay ſomething farther to ſhew that it is very frivolous. For to make the objection againſt the Profitableneſs of Prayer taken from experience, a good and valid argument againſt Prayer, I obſerv'd to you that ſeveral things were ſuppos'd, of which if any one ſhould fail, the argument againſt Prayer would not be concluſive; but if all upon tryal ſhould be found falſe, it ought to be rejected by us, as groundleſs, empty and frivolous.

IT is urg'd by the objectors againſt Prayer, that it is not look'd upon by God, and that therefore it is to no purpoſe practis'd by men; that if men pray, God doth not regard their Prayers, and that therefore 'tis in vain for them to pray any longer; that this diſregard is evident from the unſucceſsfulneſs of their Prayers; for that the bleſſings they pray for are not granted, the evils they pray againſt are not remov'd, and that therefore they may well reckon that their Prayers are diſregarded. In which way of arguing it muſt be ſuppos'd,

I. That becauſe God has not yet regarded their Prayers, therefore for the future he will not;
II. That becauſe God regards not ſome ſort of Prayers, therefore he will regard none;
III. That becauſe God anſwers not the particular requeſts of ſuch as pray unto him, therefore he regards not their Prayers.

All theſe things muſt be ſuppos'd true, to make this a good objection againſt the Profitableneſs of Prayer; but the contrary of each is true, and therefore it is a bad one.

That thoſe very Prayers, which God has not yet heard, he may vouchſafe to hear upon their being repeated, I have already prov'd; and ſhewn at large, that Prayer doth not for its own ſake deſerve an immediate grant, and that therefore it is not unjuſt in God to deny our firſt petitions; that God has no where promis'd to hear our firſt Prayers, and that therefore it is no ways repugnant to his veracity to ſuſpend his grant; that it depends upon his free bounty, whether he will at laſt grant our requeſts or not, and that therefore we ought to adore his goodneſs, if he vouchſafes even upon our repeated Prayers to hear us; that there may be many good reaſons, why God ſhould not hear our firſt Prayers, which we are not able to diſcover; that there are many good reaſons, why he ſhould not hear our firſt Prayers, which we are able to aſſign; that by ſuch delay of God's mercies, our patience is exercis'd, our carnal deſires mortified, our faith tried, our humility improv'd, our truſt in God ſhewn, our ſubmiſſion to his will manifeſted, our value for his mercies heightned, and our entire dependence upon his goodneſs and bounty clearly demonſtrated; that we cannot from the rejection of our firſt Prayers, deſpair of the acceptance of our renew'd addreſſes, becauſe we have in holy Scripture frequent inſtances of the power and efficacy of reiterated Prayers; that the greateſt favourites of heaven have not been heard at the firſt inſtance, and that the moſt unworthy ſupplicants have been heard for their importunity; that therefore neither our own pretended worthineſs ought to make us preſume, nor our ſuppos'd unworthineſs make us deſpair; that ſince there are ſo good grounds, why God out of mercy ſhould for ſome time diſcover no regard to thoſe Prayers, which he will be ſure out of the ſame mercy at laſt to accept, God's diſregard of our Prayers at firſt, is no argument, that the ſame Prayers continu'd will be ineffectual.

But now let us ſuppoſe, that nothing of all this had been, or could be prov'd; that no reaſons could be offer'd, none ſuppos'd for God's denying our firſt Prayers, which would not conclude equally againſt his hearing the ſame Prayers repeated; nay, let us ſuppoſe farther, that it could be demonſtrated on the other ſide, that God never anſwers thoſe Prayers upon their being continued, which upon their firſt being offer'd to him he had rejected, yet even this will not prove the Unprofitableneſs of Prayer, becauſe

Secondly, Tho' the ſame Prayers repeated may have no title to God's acceptance, yet other ſort of Prayers ſubſtituted in their room may have fair pretenſions to his favour, ſo that God's diſregard of ſome ſort of

Prayers, is no good argument of the abſolute unprofitableneſs of Prayer.

If our firſt Prayers are not heard, the reaſon of their failure may be, becauſe they are our firſt; if the ſame Prayers repeated meet with a repulſe, we muſt look out for ſome other reaſon of their non-acceptance; and that reaſon, if we ſearch impartially, it will not be difficult to find. For our repeated Prayers, tho' they may have a title to God's favour on account of their being repeated, may yet be chargeable with ſome other defect, which may take off from their worth, and make them leſs acceptable to God. For Prayer is not abſolutely, and in all circumſtances, acceptable to God; but is pleaſing, or diſpleaſing to him, according to the ſeveral ends to which it is deſign'd, and the different manner of its performance. That purity of intention, which is neceſſary to the perfection of all other chriſtian duties, is much more neceſſary, and indiſpenſible in this; for tho' that alone cannot render our Prayers acceptable to God, yet we are aſſur'd that without that they will not be accepted of him. As there are ſome who have not, becauſe they ask not; ſo there are others who *ask, and receive not, becauſe* they *ask amiſs, that* they *may conſume* what they hope to receive *upon their luſts.* Jam. 4. 3.

Prayer, as well as other religious duties, may be perform'd out of vanity and oſtentation, not to gain the favour of God, but to court the applauſe of men. Thus the hypocritical Phariſees pray'd *ſtanding in the ſynagogues, and corners of the ſtreets*; not that they had any intent to glorifie God by this ſolemn and publick invocation of his name, but *that they might be ſeen* and commended *of men.* Now theſe our Saviour tells us *had their reward*; they gain'd the applauſe they ſo induſtriouſly ſought, and becauſe they ſought it, were debarr'd from all hopes of a *reward from their Father which is in heaven.* For no one can have any plea to a recompence from God for any actions, but what are done becauſe of his command, for his ſake, and to his glory. But when religious duties are perform'd barely in proſpect of recommending our ſelves by them to the good opinion of men, they are ſo far from tending to the glory of God, that there can be no greater diſhonour to his holy name, than to diſguiſe our pride and hypocriſy under the ſpecious ſhew of piety and devotion. Matt. 6. 5. v. 1.

A False appearance of ſanctity, as it may procure reſpect and reverence amongſt men, ſo it may create in them a truſt, and confidence in thoſe, whom they preſume by their outward deportment to be under the influences of Religion: ſo that men may approach to God's Courts, and there ſhew all the exteriour ſigns of devotion, in order to promote, not their ſpiritual, but their carnal intereſt; they may hope thereby to procure, not God's ineſtimable bleſſings, but ſome paltry, mean, temporal advantage; whilſt they perform ſuch acts, as in their own nature and tendency properly expreſs a truſt and affiance in God, they may intend no more than to gain by them ſuch a truſt of their integrity, and opinion of their holineſs amongſt men, as they may abuſe to the wrong of their deluded brethren, and to the advancement of their own worldly intereſts. This indirect aim brought upon the Phariſees that wo denounc'd againſt them by our Saviour: *Wo unto you, Scribes, and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye devour widows houſes, and for a pretence make long Prayers: therefore ye ſhall receive the greater damnation.* The Prayers you offer to God ſhall be ſo far from procuring a bleſſing, that they ſhall prove a curſe; the length of them ſhall be ſo far from Mat. 23. 14.

adding to the worth of them, that it ſhall add to the weight and terror of that curſe. For tho' Prayers are a duty commanded by God, and tho' long Prayers may be an argument of a ſteady and unwearied devotion; yet when they are made a pretence to cover injuſtice, they expoſe thoſe who thus abuſe God's ordinance to greater damnation.

AND as ſome frequent the places of publick worſhip, to promote by that appearance of ſanctity their reputation or intereſt; ſo others may joyn themſelves with the aſſembly of the ſaints, not becauſe of the authority of God, but becauſe of the command of their ſuperiors, whom it is not ſafe for them to diſobey; or merely out of compliance with the cuſtom of thoſe, with whom it is their lot to live and converſe; but ſuch Prayers as theſe are of no value in the ſight of God, becauſe they proceed, not from a free choice and religious principle, but from the motives of fear or ſhame.

SUPERSTITION, and a wrong notion of the efficacy of Prayers, as if we might compound by them for the neglect of the more weighty duties of the law and of the goſpel, may make ſome men very frequent and diligent in Prayer: for thoſe, who think they can merit heaven by it without ſanctity of life, and it were to be wiſh'd there were none amongſt Chriſtians, none even amongſt reform'd Chriſtians who thought ſo, will not let ſlip ſo eaſie and cheap a purchaſe. Very many, and very different may be the ends propos'd by men in the performance of this duty, as manifold, and as various, as are the paſſions, tempers, and intereſts of men; ſome of the ends vicious, and ſuch as render our Prayers abominable in the ſight of God; others of them ſuch, as if taken with a due ſubordination to that which ought to be the ultimate end of this, and all other chriſtian duties, are not totally ſinful, but neither are they ſuch, as will of themſelves give our Prayers any title to God's acceptance. For ſince Prayer is an inſtrumental and auxiliary duty, it muſt derive all its virtue and efficacy from the principle from which it ſprings, and the end to which it ſerves; and therefore cannot be profitable to us, or acceptable to God any farther, than as it flows from a principle of unaffected piety, and miniſters to the great ends of virtue and religion.

WHEN it is perform'd as an act of ſolemn worſhip to God, when it expreſſes our entire dependence upon him, when it proceeds from a well-grounded truſt in his goodneſs and power; when it is made uſe of as the proper means appointed by him to derive on our ſelves, or others, thoſe bleſſings which he is pleas'd to diſpenſe to thoſe, and thoſe only that aſk; when we neither pray to pleaſe men, nor to gratify our vanity, nor to ſerve our carnal intereſts, but purely to honour God, and to ſave our own ſouls; when our intentions do anſwer the intention of the work we are employ'd in, and we propoſe to our ſelves thoſe ends in praying to God, for which the duty of Prayer was inſtituted by God; then, and not till then, may we hope that our Prayers will be acceptable, and may come boldly to the throne of Grace with a modeſt aſſurance of obtaining mercy, and finding help in the time of need.

THUS abſolutely neceſſary is a good intention to recommend our Prayers to God's acceptance; for tho' actions in themſelves evil cannot be ſanctified by our intending well, yet actions in themſelves laudable may be ſpoil'd by the mixture of a wrong, or the want of a right intention; and tho' we do not think with the *Romaniſts* that the want of a good intention in the Miniſters of God's Word, Prayer, and Sacraments, can an weaken the power of the Word, deſtroy the efficacy of the Sacra-nents, or take away from the prevalency of thoſe Prayers which they ffer up to God, by the appointment, and for the benefit of the Church: o that the Word by them preach'd, the Sacraments by them admini-tred, the Prayers by them offer'd, ſhould thro' the wrong intention of uch evil Miniſters convey no inſtruction, confer no grace, procure no leſſings to thoſe, who are rightly diſpos'd to receive the ſame; yet we nuſt ſo far own the neceſſity of a good intention, as to acknowledge hat the want of it in our ſelves, whether in hearing the Word, or in re-eiving the Sacraments, or in offering to God our Supplications, may inder us of thoſe advantages, which theſe ordinances, thro' the grace f God, and in virtue of his appointment, convey to thoſe, who make ſe of them with that purity of intention, which is abſolutely requiſite o make them uſeful.

The perſonal defect of one man cannot turn to the prejudice of ano-her; and therefore the wrong intentions of an ill-diſpos'd Miniſter, can-ot hurt the ſpiritual welfare of a rightly-diſpos'd hearer. But we are ll anſwerable for our own proper faults, and therefore the want of a ood intention in praying may deſervedly defeat us of receiving any enefit by our Prayers. If Miniſters preach the Word of God rightly, nd adminiſter Chriſt's Sacraments according to his appointment, the want of a good Intention in them, who are only ſubordinate agents, cannot hinder the validity of thoſe acts, which have all their efficacy, not from the inſtruments by which they are immediately perform'd, but from the original author, and principal agent, from whoſe inſtitu-ion they derive all their virtue and energy: but when we offer up our Prayers to God, theſe, unleſs they are pour'd forth to thoſe ends, which e hath appointed; unleſs they are perform'd in that manner which he hath commanded; unleſs they are accompanied with a pure intention n him who offers them, want one qualification which is poſitively re-quir'd to render them ſuch, as God hath promis'd to accept.

But neither will a good end alone ſanctifie our Prayers without other circumſtances, which are of equal neceſſity with this, to make them ac-ceptable. For tho' no Prayers will be effectual which are offer'd to God without a good intention, yet neither on the other ſide will all Prayers, that are made with an honeſt intention, be prevalent; tho' this is ne-ceſſary to make our Prayers accepted, yet this alone is not ſufficient. There are ſeveral graces, which muſt attend our Prayers, that they may be pleaſing to God; and there is no one vice muſt accompany them, leſt they become abominable. As the end for which we pray, muſt be ſuch as God has ordain'd; ſo the manner in which we pray, muſt be ſuch as God has directed. For tho' the Scripture attributes great force and efficacy to Prayer, yet it doth not aſcribe this marvellous power to all ſorts of Prayer, but to Prayers ſo and ſo qualify'd: for ſince in holy Writ, we have ſeveral rules preſcrib'd for the right performance of this duty, we may be ſure that the great effects in Scripture attributed to Prayer, belong only to ſuch Prayers as the ſame Scripture ſuppoſes and requires. It is not ſufficient therefore that we pray as often as we ought, but we muſt alſo pray as we ought: there is a certain rule and art of Prayer, which we muſt be maſters of, and perfect in, if we would obtain thoſe gracious promiſes, which are made, not indifferently to all, but peculiarly to ſome ſorts of Prayers.

The art of perſwading men hath in all ages employ'd the thoughts of the moſt refin'd wits; hath been cultivated with great care by thoſe, who have pretended to teach it, and hath been ſtudied with exquiſite diligence by thoſe, who have deſir'd to learn it: but certainly the art of perſwading God, if I may ſo ſpeak, and of prevailing with him to favour our cauſe, is much more fit to be taught, much more requiſite to be learn'd. Now this art is taught us in the Goſpel; this we may learn, if we will duly attend to the doctrines of the Goſpel; this if we do learn, and are perfect in, we ſhall reap ineſtimable advantages from our skill and proficiency in ſo excellent, and ſo uſeful a part of knowledge.

ALL that we can do by the utmoſt efforts of human eloquence is to bend the wills of men like our ſelves, to work upon their inclinations, and thereby to influence their actions, in ſuch a manner and to ſuch ends, as may be moſt to our advantage: but by Prayer we do as it were determine the will of God; we incline him to do, what we would have done for us, and do in a manner diſpoſe of that power, which is omnipotent. An artful way of ſpeaking works thoſe great effects upon men, which thoſe, who are ſtrangers to that way, marvel at, when they ſee them wrought by others, but are not able to work themſelves: and one peculiar way of praying, doth in like manner work thoſe marvellous effects with God, which thoſe, who are not converſant in it, may think incredible; but thoſe, who are exercis'd in this way, will find to be very practicable.

IT being therefore of ſuch great importance to know how we ought to pray to God, what that manner of praying is, which will render our Prayers acceptable, what thoſe qualifications are, which God requires in that peculiar ſort of Prayers, to which he hath in Scripture annex'd ſo gracious promiſes; I will point out to you the chief of thoſe qualities, which are moſt eſſential to a valid and effectual Prayer. Now theſe are;

Firſt, TRUST in him, to whom we pray.

Secondly, ATTENTION of mind, whilſt we pray.

Thirdly, A FERVENT Deſire of that, for which we pray.

Fourthly, THE deepeſt Humility of ſoul and body in the act of praying.

OUR Confidence muſt be ſuch, as excludes all deſpondency; our Attention ſuch, as ſhuts out all wandring; our Warmth ſuch, as conquers all indifferency; our Humility ſuch, as ſubdues all proud conceit of our ſelves, and all vain dependance upon our own merits.

THE Faith, with which we offer up our Prayers to God, muſt bear proportion to the ſure promiſes of God, on which it is to be built; our Attention, to the weight and importance of that religious duty, about which we are employ'd; our Fervency and Zeal to the earneſtneſs of thoſe wants, under which we labour; our Humility to the glory and majeſty of that Being, to whom our Prayers are addreſs'd.

AND *Firſt*, That Aſſurance which St. *James* hath taught us is a neceſſary requiſite in our Prayers for obtaining wiſdom, is equally neceſſary in our Prayers for any other gift of God: *If any of you lack wiſdom,* ſaith the Apoſtle, *let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it ſhall be given him: but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth, is like a wave of the ſea, driven by the wind, and toſs'd; for let not that man,* that wavering, that fluctuating, that faithleſs man, *think that he ſhall receive any thing of the Lord.* He that prays to God for a bleſſing, and at the ſame time hath not aſſurance in God, that he will grant that, or ſome other equi-

Jam. 1. 5,6,7.

valent

valent bleſſing, contradicts himſelf. For his Prayer to God is built upon the ſuppoſal of God's power to enable him, and goodneſs to diſpoſe him to grant what is ask'd; but his diſtruſt on the other ſide, if it any way refers to God, which is the only diſtruſt we are now arming againſt, muſt either reflect on his power, as if he were not able, or on his goodneſs, as if he were not willing to aſſiſt thoſe, who call upon him.

THE majeſty and glory of God are indeed apt rather to ſtrike awe and terrour into our ſouls, than to create in us a truſt and confidence in our approaches to him; but thoſe, whom *the terrours of the Lord* may juſtly affright, the conſideration of God's infinite mercy and goodneſs will on the other ſide powerfully encourage to *draw near* unto him *with faith.* If we take a view of our own meanneſs, and his glory; our own ſinfulneſs, and his purity; and go about to meaſure that immenſe diſtance there is betwixt God, and his creature; and that, if poſſible, ſtill more than immenſe diſtance there is betwixt a ſinful creature, and that immaculate Being, who hateth all iniquity; it will ſeem preſumption enough to pray unto him, without adding to it the yet greater confidence of hoping, that the Prayers of ſuch impotent, ſuch mean, ſuch wretched ſupplicants, ſhould work upon ſo powerful, ſo ſublime, ſo awful a majeſty. For, to weaken our confidence, it may be ſaid, What boldneſs is it for us vile *duſt and aſhes*; for us, whom God *hath made as the clay*, and whom by the breath of his diſpleaſure he can ſoon *bring into duſt again*, to preſent our ſelves before the throne of the Lord, the great and dreadful God? *What is man*, that God ſhould take ſuch knowledge of him, or *the ſon of man*, that he ſhould make account of him? But what yet greater arrogance is it for us, who have ſo often and ſo heinouſly ſinn'd againſt God, whoſe backſlidings are ſo many, and ſo grievous, in number more, in weight heavier than the ſands of the ſea, to preſent our ſelves before his ſight, who is *of purer eyes than* Hab. 1. 13. *to behold*, of more piercing eyes than to overlook the leaſt *iniquity*? *Righteouſneſs belongeth* to God; and therefore *unto us belongeth con-* Dan. 9. 7. *fuſion of face, becauſe of the treſpaſſes that we have treſpaſs'd againſt him.*

BUT our arrogance doth not ſtop here; we, whom the ſenſe of our meanneſs, and the conſciouſneſs of our guilt, ſhould, one would think, reſtrain from approaching to a God of majeſty and purity, are ſo hardy, as to aſſure our ſelves, that we ſhall receive what we ask. Is not this aſſurance, if rightly examin'd, rather a ſin to be repented of, than a qualification proper to render our Prayers acceptable unto God? Is it not a preſumption, that doth it ſelf want to be pardon'd, rather than an effectual mean of procuring pardon for our paſt tranſgreſſions? And tho' it may look like a chriſtian grace, when call'd by the ſpecious name of faith and aſſurance; yet would it not be own'd to be a deteſtable crime, if call'd by its own more proper name of preſumption and inſolence? It would ſo, without doubt, if we either thruſt our ſelves into God's preſence, without being invited thither by his Word; or preſum'd to come into his courts, truſting in our own righteouſneſs; or expected to be heard, without having good grounds for ſuch expectation from his gracious promiſes.

BUT when our approaches to him are in obedience to his peremptory command; when our hopes are built upon his ſure mercies; when our confidence is ſupported by his expreſs promiſes; we cannot withdraw our ſelves from his preſence, without violation of his authority;

we cannot deſpair of acceptance, without derogation to his goodneſs; we cannot doubt of ſucceſs, without diſtruſt of his veracity. Whatever arguments therefore can be offer'd to weaken our faith, or ſtagger our hopes, or ſhake our confidence, are all anſwer'd by that gracious promiſe of our Saviour; *I ſay unto you, what things ſoever ye deſire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye ſhall have them.* *I ſay unto you*; I, to whom all power is given both in heaven and earth, and who therefore can make good what I ſay; I, who by my prevalent interceſſion with my Father in heaven ſhall ſecond the requeſts, which you make upon earth; I, who by the merits of my death have a right to claim, what you for your own ſakes have no ground to expect; *I ſay unto you, what things ſoever ye deſire, ye ſhall receive*: be the things ask'd never ſo great, they are not without the compaſs of Omnipotence to grant; be they never ſo diſproportion'd to your deſerts, they do not ſurpaſs the bounds of my merits: *believe that ye receive them, and ye ſhall have them*: be the obſtacles that might intercept betwixt God and you never ſo ſtrong, yet faith will eaſily ſurmount them; the efficacy of faith, which extends ſo far as to remove mountains, will much more prevail for the acceptance of your Prayers: I have already ſaid unto you, *that whoſoever ſhall ſay unto this mountain, be thou remov'd, and be thou caſt into the ſea, and ſhall not doubt in his heart, but ſhall believe that thoſe things which he ſaith ſhall come to paſs, he ſhall have whatſoever he ſaith.* Therefore I, who have ſaid ſo much of the power of faith, cannot be thought to attribute too much to its efficacy, when I ſay unto you, *whatſoever things ye deſire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye ſhall have them.*

Mark 11. 24.

c. 11. 23.

HAVING therefore ſo expreſs a promiſe of Chriſt, having ſuch aſſurance of the efficacy of faith, having ſo powerful an interceſſor with the Father, we may ſafely conclude that there are good grounds for our praying without diffidence, and that a firm reliance on the power, the goodneſs, and the promiſe of God, thro' the merits of Chriſt, is one qualification very neceſſary to make our Prayers effectual.

ATTENTION of mind to the Prayers we pour forth, is the ſecond of thoſe qualities, which I told you were eſſential to a valid, and acceptable Prayer.

INWARD devotion of heart, and application of mind to the work we are employ'd in, muſt always attend the ſacrifice of our lips. There is ſo intimate and cloſe a connexion betwixt theſe, that in Scripture either they are not at all diſtinguiſh'd; or, where they are, the Prayers of thoſe are declar'd abominable, who *draw near to* God *with their* lips, when *their hearts are far from* him. This hollow, heartleſs, ſuperficial ſervice is ſo far from entitling us to the favour, that it renders us obnoxious to the diſpleaſure of God. The Prophet *Iſaiah* denounceth the judgments of heaven againſt ſuch thoughtleſs ſupplicants; and our Saviour applies the Prophet's denunciation to the *Phariſees*, in whom he diſcover'd the ſame outward forms of devotion without the inward vital power of it: *Ye hypocrites, well did Eſaias propheſie of you, ſaying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, but their heart is far from me.*

Mat. 15. 7, 8.

DEVOTION of mind is it ſelf a ſilent Prayer, which wants not to be cloath'd in words, that God may better know our deſires, but that our attention may be the more fixt, our thoughts the more ſteady, and our imaginations the more governable. Now if vocal Prayers, or Prayers

put

ut into words ſerve only to add vigour to the inward devotions of our nind, great care muſt be taken, as hath been taken by the Church in er publick Liturgies, that they be, as in their matter lawful and free rom ſcandal, ſo in their very manner and expreſſion ſolemn and wor-hy of God. It is true indeed, that God regards not the ſervice of our ips, but the inward diſpoſition of our hearts; but ſince one has ſo great n influence on the other, ſince there is that cloſe connexion betwixt ur words and thoughts, that when in the language of our Prayers, there life and warmth, decency and gravity, order and method, propriety nd perſpicuity, then our affections are moſt warm, our ſentiments of od moſt awful, our thoughts moſt orderly, and our attentions moſt xt; thoſe Prayers, which are intended to add ſtrength to our inward evotions, ought to be ſo form'd and contriv'd as may beſt miniſter o that holy purpoſe.

DISSIPATION of thought is ſo apt to creep upon thoſe, who are noſt upon their guard againſt it; the Devil is ſo buſy to ſuggeſt evil houghts, and our own imaginations and memories are ſo plentifully ockt with idle ones, that we cannot take too great care to prevent a niſchief ſo ready to beſet us, and ſo fatal to the efficacy of our Prayers. he very make and frame of our ſouls is ſuch, that it is extremely difficult to keep the ſame thoughts ſtill in view; if we attend to what paſſes within our ſelves, we find that there is a certain train of thoughts, which re conſtantly on float in our minds; ſome go, and others quickly ſucceed in their room; ſo that, when we take moſt care to keep our thoughts from roving, we find it not eaſie to ſettle and fix, what in its own nature is ſo wandring and volatile. God therefore who is no ſevere *task-maſter, who doth not require brick, where he hath not allow'd ſtraw,* nor expect that we ſhould ſerve him, but in proportion to the ſtrength of thoſe faculties, which he hath given us, will graciouſly pardon our unavoidable infirmities, our involuntary wandrings, and the ungovern-ble diſtractions of our thoughts. Theſe we ought in our penitential Prayers humbly to confeſs, and grievouſly to lament, but ſhall not perhaps after all our care, be able wholly to avoid; theſe are the ſad effects of our degenerate and corrupt eſtate, to be worn off gradually ccording to our growth in grace, but not to be quite ſubdu'd till *this mortal ſhall put on immortality.*

BUT tho' God's mercy will aſſuredly extend to the acquittal of us from any guilt for thoſe defects, which thro' the infirmity of our natures we are not able, with all our care and diligence, to avoid; yet this will not cover us from his diſpleaſure for thoſe wandrings of thought, which are affected and voluntary. When idle and foreign thoughts do not offer themſelves to us, and violently thruſt themſelves upon us, but we give up our ſelves to them, and willingly invite and entertain them; when we take no care at all to collect our thoughts in Prayer, but willingly and knowingly permit them to rove upon other objects; when thro' the power of our luſts, or the cares of the world, our minds are ſo deeply and totally immers'd in ſenſual and carnal things, that we cannot call them off, as we ought to do, to ſpiritual and religious duties; when for want of due care and attention we ſet our thoughts adrift, and ſuffer them without check or controll to wander at random; when we neither before our entry upon this ſolemn duty prepare our ſelves for it, by imprinting on our ſouls venerable and awful notions of the tranſcendent majeſty of that ſupreme Being, to whom we approach;

nor during our religious exerciſe, retain a vigorous and lively ſenſe of the exceeding glory of that God, before whom we ſtand; when the words we pour forth are vain empty ſounds, unaccompanied with any inward conceptions anſwering to them; ſuch wandring, diſtracted, Rom. 12. 1. thoughtleſs Prayers as theſe, are not that *reaſonable ſervice*, which alone is *acceptable unto God*.

But neither is Attention of mind ſufficient of it ſelf to render our Prayers effectual, unleſs

Thirdly, We are earneſt and fervent in Prayer, as well as ſerious and attentive.

As our underſtandings muſt be enlightned, that we may know and conſider what we do, ſo our affections muſt be warm'd, that there may be life and vigour in our devotions. A faint, cool, languid petition betrays a great indifferency, whether we obtain what we aſk, or not: and when we our ſelves are unconcern'd, whether our requeſts are granted, or denied, we have no reaſon to complain, which way ſoever God determines his will, whilſt ours are ſo near a ſtate of indifferency.

Should he, who begs an alms of us, by the air of his face, or tone of his voice, or by any other indication of his mind, ſhew that he hath little or no concern, whether we relieve him or not, we ſhould not think our ſelves oblig'd by the rules of charity to throw away a boon upon one, whoſe deportment was ſo little fitted to move compaſſion. Real want, where there is a quick ſenſe of it, will find a way of expreſſing it ſelf in ſuch a manner, as to excite pity: thoſe who feel themſelves to be wretched and miſerable will naturally uſe ſuch methods as are moſt likely to make thoſe perſons, to whom they apply for relief, ſenſible of their condition: and if we are thoroughly conſcious to our ſelves of our own indigence; of our utter inability to ſupply our preſſing wants by our own ſtrength, and our neceſſary dependence upon God who alone can ſupply them; this deep ſenſe of our neceſſities will make us warm, vehement, and eager for relief. St. *James* tells us that *the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous man availeth much*: and when he gives us an inſtance out of the old Teſtament of the prevalency of *Elias*'s Prayer, he takes care to tell us, that *he pray'd earneſtly*. The power of ſuch an earneſt Prayer in prevailing with God to grant what we aſk, is expreſs'd in a manner not unlike to that, which the Scriptures make uſe of to expreſs the Gen. 1. 3. power of God in producing all things: *God ſaid, Let there be light, and there was light*; ſo *Moſes* expreſſes the power of God's Word in Jam. 5. 17,18. the creation. *Elias prayed earneſtly that it might not rain, and it rained not; and he pray'd again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit*; ſo St. *James* expreſſes the energy of *Elias*'s fer- Pſal. 44. 1,2. vent Prayer in altering the courſe of nature. *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, ſo* David's *ſoul panted after God*: his *ſoul* Pſal. 63. 1. *thirſted for God, for the living God*: his *fleſh longed for* him as *a dry* Pſal. 84. 2. *and thirſty land, where no water is*: his *ſoul longed, yea, even fainted for the courts of the Lord*; his *heart and* his *fleſh cried out for the living God*. The panting of an hart wearied, purſued and ſpent; the drought of parch'd, chop'd, and gaping land; the cravings of hunger and thirſt; the faintings and longings of women with child for the objects they are in pain for, are proper and lively images of a warm, affectionate, and eager concern for thoſe bleſſings, which the holy *Pſalmiſt* thus hungred, thirſted, panted, and longed after.

And as the holy *David* hath throughout the whole book of *Pſalms* eft evident tokens of a warm, hearty, and vigorous devotion, ſo hath Chriſt alſo, *the Son of David*, given us in his own unerring example a tanding pattern of a vehement, pathetick, and fervent Prayer, *Being n an agony, he pray'd earneſtly* ſaith the Evangeliſt, ἐκτενέστερον, more ntenſely, more upon the ſtretch; and this earneſtneſs of Prayer ſhew'd t ſelf by the marvellous effects it had upon the very frame and texture of his body; for *his ſweat was as it were great drops of blood falling lown to the ground*. This fervency of Chriſt's Prayers was in St. *Paul*'s view, when he tells the *Hebrews*, that Chriſt *in the days of his fleſh ffer'd up prayers and ſupplications, with ſtrong crying and tears, unto him that was able to ſave him from death, and was heard, in that he fear'd.* Luc. 22. 44. c. 5. 7.

If therefore we have a juſt and lively ſenſe of our own wants; if we have a true value for the bleſſings we ſtand in need of, and pray for; f we would copy after thoſe excellent patterns, which the Saints of God have ſet us in their Prayers; if we would in the performance of this duty imitate that model, which our bleſſed Saviour hath given us of an effectual Prayer, we ſhall think Fervency of ſpirit another quality, requiſite to render our Prayers acceptable in the ſight of God.

Humility was the fourth and laſt property I mention'd, as neceſſary and eſſential to give force, and ſtrength, and ſucceſs to our Prayers.

No oppoſition is ſo ſhocking, no contradiction ſo abſurd, as that which there naturally is betwixt Prayer and Vanity. Prayer is in it ſelf, and in its own nature, the moſt humbling, mortifying action in the world: by it we own our ſelves to be indigent, dependent creatures; and want is, one would think, a ſure remedy againſt pride; dependence a powerful motive for our being humble.

The great diſproportion there is betwixt God and us; betwixt his power, and our weakneſs; his all-ſufficiency, and our poverty; his glory, and our vileneſs; his holineſs, and our impurity, are motives to humility, which will offer themſelves to every one's conſideration, without being ſuggeſted; and which, where they are duly attended to, cannot fail to work in us the deepeſt humility both of body and ſoul. If the moſt perfect of God's Saints have humbled themſelves to the duſt in his glorious preſence; if *the elders fall down before him, who ſits on the throne, and worſhip him that liveth for ever and ever, and caſt their crowns before the throne*, in acknowledgement of their ſubjection, and his power; if the bleſſed *Evangeliſts* repreſented by the four beaſts in the *Apocalypſe*, *give glory, and honour, and thanks*, and worſhip *to him that ſitteth on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever*; if the Seraphims, who ſurround the throne, cover their faces, as conſcious of their own unworthineſs, and not able to bear the exceeding glory of his majeſtick preſence; nay, if the holy Jeſus himſelf, whom *God hath highly exalted, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth*, did, whilſt he dwelt among men, uſe the loweſt proſtrations in his addreſſes to the Father, *and fell upon his face*, nothing needs to be ſaid more, nothing can well be farther ſuperadded to convince us how neceſſary an ingredient humility is in our ſupplications to God, and how great an influence it hath towards rendring our Prayers acceptable unto him. Rev. 4. 10. v. 9. Phil. 2. 9, 10. Mat. 26. 39.

And now having mention'd thoſe ſeveral graces, which are abſolutely neceſſary to make our Prayers ſucceſsful, I cannot think it needful

ful to ſhew that the contrary ſins, or any other wilful and habitual tranſgreſſions of God's laws continued in, and unrepented of, muſt not only hinder their wholſome efficacy, but, which is yet more fatal, turn them into ſin. For whatever gracious promiſes are made to Prayer, are ſtill confin'd to the petitions of the righteous; and *the Prayer of the upright is* not oftner call'd *the delight of God*, than *the ſacrifice of the wicked is* declar'd *an abomination unto him*.

Prov. 15. 8.

IN our enquiry therefore into the profitableneſs of Prayer, we muſt be careful not to confound what God hath plainly diſtinguiſh'd: what he hath promis'd to the ſincere, confiding, attentive, fervent, humble votary, we muſt not apply to hypocritical, deſponding, wandring, languid, proud petitioners. Some ſort of Prayers God hath promis'd to hear; another ſort he hath threatned not only to deny, but to revenge: thoſe, which are ſo qualified as he directs, may hope to find acceptance with him; others which want any perfection they ought to have, or are ſullied with any blemiſh they ought to be free from, have no title to the divine favour; ſo that another of the ſuppoſitions made by the objectors againſt Prayer is prov'd groundleſs, ſince it hath been ſhewn at large that it by no means follows, that becauſe God regards not ſome Prayers, he will therefore regard none.

THERE remains another ſuppoſal of the objectors to be examin'd and confuted at our next opportunity.

SER-

SERMON V.

The Profitableneſs of Prayer.

JOB XXI. 15.

What profit ſhould we have, if we pray unto him?

The fourth Sermon on this Text.

I AM ſtill in proſecution of the ſubject I have already at large diſcours'd to you of; for having entred upon the defence of Prayer againſt the objections of ungodly and prophane men againſt it, I thought it proper to examine their objections to the bottom, to ſet them in their true light, and to give them their full force, that it might appear, all their ſtrength conſiſted more in the boldneſs of the arguers, than in the weight of the arguments. It was eaſie enough to prove, that what they offer againſt the profitableneſs of Prayer, was far from being a ſatisfactory, and convincing proof againſt it; and that hath been more than ſufficiently made out in my former diſcourſes. But I was willing to expoſe, not only the weakneſs, but the folly of the objectors; and to ſhew, that their argument did not only want firm grounds to ſtand upon, but that all the ſuppoſitions, on which it was built, were precarious and falſe; that all the principles they proceed upon in their cavils are wildly extravagant; and that not only one, or ſome of the premiſes they draw this concluſion from, are miſtaken; but that every one of thoſe things, which they ſuppoſe true, in order to prove their aſſertion, is manifeſtly falſe; and that therefore their aſſertion is as vain, as it is bold; as contrary to reaſon, as it is prejudicial to Religion.

I WILL not now repeat any thing which hath been ſaid, but ſuppoſing you to remember that it hath been prov'd, that all the pretended difficulties urg'd againſt the uſefulneſs of Prayer from the attributes of God, with which the hearing of Prayer is thought inconſiſtent, have been ſolv'd; and that all the arguments taken from the reaſon of the thing have been fully anſwer'd; and that to the other arguments drawn from experience it hath been replied, that the ſuppoſitions, on which they are built, are falſe; and that the truth of this reply hath been made out as to two of thoſe ſuppoſitions, becauſe

I. The ſame Prayers repeated may be of ſome force, where the firſt Prayers were not heard; ſo that God's diſregard of our firſt Prayers is no good reaſon, why we ſhould deſiſt from renewing our petitions; and becauſe

II. Other Prayers ſubſtituted in the room of thoſe, which have not been heard, may be anſwer'd; ſo that God's diſregard of ſome ſort of Prayers, is no reaſon for our intermiſſion of all; I proceed now in the

III. and laſt place to prove, that

Tho' God doth not grant the particular requeſts of ſuch as pray unto him, he may yet regard their Prayers; ſo that God's abſolute and peremptory denial of our requeſts, is no good argument againſt praying unto him.

The objectors ſuppoſe, that there is no other profit in our Prayers, but the grant of our requeſts; that if they are denied, our Prayers are made to no purpoſe; and that if our Prayers do not obtain for us what we aſk, nothing more needs to be ſaid to prove them unprofitable. The obtaining from God thoſe bleſſings we petition for, is indeed one great advantage of Prayer. This is an advantage the ſervants of God have great reaſon to value; and an advantage, which we have prov'd from Scripture they have a good title to; and from experience, that they are in poſſeſſion of, and enjoy it to their unſpeakable comfort. But tho' this is a great benefit, yet it is not the only benefit that reſults from their Prayers: tho' where they reap this advantage from their Prayers, they have great reaſon to thank God for it; yet where they fall ſhort of it, they have no reaſon to complain, or to think their Prayers uſeleſs; for tho' this advantage ſhould fail them, yet they have others ſtill in reſerve. Did we never obtain of God any of thoſe bleſſings we aſk, yet the conſciouſneſs of having done our duty in aſking, would be a ſatiſfaction worth our aiming at; and the proſpect of a future reward for having done as we ought, would ſupport us in the midſt of all our diſcouragements, from our requeſts being denied. *Tho' he ſlay me*, ſaith holy *Job, yet will I truſt in him*: tho' my truſt doth not procure me that ſafety I depend on him for; yet ſince truſt in God is my duty, no diſcouragement ſhall hinder it from being my practice. c. 13. 15.

Truſt in God is a proper method to obtain that bleſſing we hope to receive from him. But ſince confidence in him, and Prayer to him is a neceſſary duty, it ought to be perform'd, tho' the bleſſing aſk'd is not receiv'd at preſent; and that performance will, thro' the mercy of that God, in whom we truſt, and to whom we pray, entitle us to a future reward. Our complaint of not obtaining what we aſk, is generally grounded, not on our failing in our requeſts for ſpiritual graces; but on our falling ſhort of thoſe temporal bleſſings we pray for. We are apt to ſet too great a value on temporal bleſſings, to have too low and diſproportionable an eſteem of ſpiritual; thoſe, becauſe they are groſs, and ſtrongly affect our ſenſes, we judge ſolid and ſubſtantial; theſe, becauſe they are refin'd, and eſcape the reach of ſenſe; becauſe they cannot be ſeen and felt, we too often look upon to be notional and imaginary. And this Judgment of ours, tho' extremely wrong, may pretend to ſome colourable excuſe; and the preference of temporal bleſſings to ſpiritual, tho' it proceeds upon groſs miſtakes, yet is eaſily accountable for.

or. Senſe hath been our guide from our infancy, and may now plead reſcription for directing and governing us; we have been long acuſtom'd to judge of good and evil by this ſtandard, and it may not be aſie on a ſudden to bring them to another and a ſurer teſt. Were we ure ſpirits, we might have a juſt reliſh of ſpiritual good; but whilſt e are cloath'd with theſe bodies; whilſt we live upon earth, and conerſe only with ſenſible objects; whilſt we are aliens from the region f bleſſed ſpirits; we muſt not hope to diveſt our ſelves of the innate nd inveterate prejudices of fleſh and blood.

This looks, I confeſs, like ſomewhat of an excuſe for our own wrong entiments concerning the proportion which temporal bleſſings bear to piritual, but can never juſtifie us for attributing the ſame to God: *his houghts are not as our thoughts*; good and evil are not the ſame in his iew, as they are in ours; and it were the extremity of folly to think, hat becauſe the good things of this world ſeem to weigh down thoſe f another, when our unſteady hands hold the ſcales, they are therefore f the ſame moment, when God weighs them in the balance of the ſanctuary. And yet, when we complain that God regards not our Prayers, ecauſe he grants not thoſe temporal bleſſings for which we pray, we nuſt ſuppoſe either that God judges of them as we judge, and eſteems very thing to be good for us, which we apprehend to be ſo; or that tho' he knows that to be inconvenient, which we falſely think convenient for us; yet in compliance to our deſires he ſhould grant it: to ſuppoſe the former of theſe, is to queſtion the wiſdom of God; to ſuſpect the latter, is to impeach his goodneſs. *If* men *being evil, know how o give good gifts unto their children, how much more ſhall* our *Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?* Good, not only to them which ask good, but to ſuch alſo, who out of ignorance ask that which in the conſequences of it might prove evil; good, different from what we wiſh, but at the ſame time much above our wiſhes; good, not of that ſort and kind, which we thro' miſtake ask, but good of a more excellent ſort, and noble kind, which we really moſt want, and which will turn to our beſt advantage. And certainly he is no unkind father, *who, if his ſon ask a ſtone, will give him bread*; *or if he ask a ſerpent, will give him a fiſh.*

Mat. 7. 11.

Mat. 7. 9, 10.

There is no greater inſtance of the goodneſs of God, than that he ſometimes vouchſafes in mercy to deny, what we ask; and perhaps, if we conſider'd things aright, it were more to be wiſh'd that God ſhould always deny, than that he ſhould always grant our Prayers. We may as well pretend to obtain the good we want without God's aſſiſtance, as to know in all caſes what is good for us without his direction; for as none but an infinite power can ſupply us with all that is good for us, ſo none but an infinite wiſdom can always diſcern what that good is. Of preſent good and evil we are able to judge well enough; we plainly feel whether at this inſtant we are eaſie or uneaſie, happy or miſerable; and preſent eaſe would always be rightly eſteem'd by us to be good, if it did not bring after it future trouble; preſent uneaſineſs would be always rightly judg'd to be evil, if it did not tend to our future happineſs. But now to judge right of a bleſſing pray'd for, and yet at a diſtance, we muſt be able to know things future, and to diſcover effects, whoſe very cauſes are as yet buried in obſcurity; we muſt know what things will attend or follow the event we wiſh; what it will prove in its laſt iſſue and conſequence; whether, tho' ſingly and apart it may be good for us, yet it may not, when it comes, be mix'd with ſuch allays of evil, or neceſſarily draw after it ſuch a train of miſchief, as may render it a curſe, inſtead of a bleſſing; whether tho' in it ſelf it may be good, yet we may not be indiſpos'd to make a right uſe of it, and ſo to us it may prove evil; whether, tho' it may conduce to the bettering our temporal good, it may not be prejudicial to our ſpiritual welfare. But theſe things fall not within our cogniſance; what is to come is hidden from our eyes; and whilſt we want the Omniſcience of God, we cannot be as God, infallibly *knowing good and evil.*

Now ſince we are thus in the dark as to what concerns our own happineſs; ſince we are not able at a diſtance to judge, whether the things we pray for will be really beneficial to us, or not; it will be our intereſt, as well as our duty, to reſign all our hopes and wiſhes to the wiſe diſpoſal of an all-ſeeing Providence; to deſire, as our Saviour hath taught us in his moſt perfect pattern of Prayer, that *God's will*, rather than our own will, *be done*; to make that our will, which is his; and ſo to prevent all poſſibility of having our deſires croſs'd, becauſe we deſire nothing, but what God ſhall be pleas'd to grant. God knows us better than we do our ſelves, and therefore cannot be ignorant of our wants; God loves us better than we do our ſelves, and therefore will not be backward to ſupply them. It is a bold preſumption to preſcribe to God Almighty; to pretend that we depend upon him, and at the ſame time to chooſe for our ſelves; to acknowledge by our very praying to him, that all things are in his ſole diſpoſal; and yet to point out for our ſhare ſuch and ſuch peculiar bleſſings, as if we would have all things according to our own wills; to draw up a long catalogue of our grievances, and to promiſe obedience for the future, on condition they are all redreſs'd and ſatisfied; to direct God how he ſhall govern the world, where he ſhall beſtow his bleſſings, and what thoſe ſpecial favours are, we ſhould be moſt pleas'd with, and moſt kindly accept at his hands.

When we are thus particular in our requeſts, no wonder if thoſe ſeveral things we deſire, do ſometimes interfere one with another, and according to the courſe of things are utterly incompatible. That very bleſſing we earneſtly beg of God, may, for ought we know, be neceſſarily link'd to that very evil, we with the ſame earneſtneſs pray againſt; and ſhould God grant one part of our Prayer, we ſhould for that reaſon be precluded from all hopes of obtaining the other. When the Patriarch *Jacob* was diſturb'd with the quarrels betwixt *Joſeph* and his brethren, what could he more naturally wiſh, and pray for, than peace among his ſons, and plenty to his whole family? And yet it is plain from the event, that, had their heats againſt *Joſeph* been cool'd, they and their father had all periſh'd with famine.

This argument muſt not be carried ſo far, as to condemn all Prayers for temporal bleſſings, but yet it is a good reaſon, why we ſhould pray for them, not peremptorily, but with limitations; not abſolutely, but with reſerve; not ſo as to murmur, if they are denied, but to be thankful, if they are granted; and thankful alſo, if they are with-held; becauſe God ſees that the with-holding them from us is more for our advantage. Whilſt we are of this reſigning temper of ſoul, we may pray for thoſe temporal bleſſings, which we apprehend to be good for us; but we ſhall not repine at God's denial of our requeſts, becauſe that is a ſign our apprehenſions were falſe. We always naturally deſire the reateſt good, tho' we do not always know what that good is: when herefore we aſk for a leſs, and God vouchſafes a greater; when we ray for temporal bleſſings, and receive from God ſpiritual, our Prayers annot properly be ſaid to be denied; ſince, tho' our expreſs requeſts re not granted, the implicit deſires of our hearts are fulfill'd; tho' what e aſk, we do not receive, yet we do receive what we ſhould, and what, we were wiſe, we would have aſk'd.

DEVOTION is in its nature proper, and in its uſe deſign'd to wean ur affections from things below; by that we converſe with heaven, nd therefore ſhould have our thoughts plac'd above earthly goods. But hen the removal of a temporal miſchief, or the obtaining of a temporal good, is the ſole aim and ultimate end of our Prayers, this encreaſes nd ſtrengthens thoſe wrong appetites, which our devotions were deſign'd to correct and ſubdue. We ſhall be apt to think, that there is o evil beyond that, which we ſo earneſtly pray againſt; no good above hat, which we pray for with the utmoſt bent of our ſouls. Temporal leſſings are of themſelves deſireable; but their value is much enhans'd, s they are the fruits of God's love, and earneſts of his future mercies: emporal evils are in themſelves grievous; but they are much more ſo, s they are the effects of God's diſpleaſure, and evident tokens of a judgment to come. Our meaſures therefore of each of theſe are not to be aken barely from the good or evil, they carry with them at preſent, ut much rather from the happineſs or miſery, of which they are the igns and fore-runners. And if our Prayers ſhould avail with God for the pardon of our ſins, or the attainment of his grace; if they ſhould e ſubſervient to the removal of his diſpleaſure, and to the entitling us o his mercy at the great day of diſtribution; we ſhould have no reaſon to complain, or think our Prayers diſregarded, tho' the particular bleſſings we pray for are not granted, or the particular evils we pray againſt are not remov'd.

THAT it may be our duty to pray, when the particular thing we pray for is not to be obtain'd by our praying, is evident from that Prayer of our Saviour, which I have had ſo frequent occaſion to inſtance in: Chriſt pray'd thrice earneſtly, *ſaying, O my Father, if it be poſſible,* Mat. 26. 39. *let this cup paſs from me.* Our Redeemer by the eternal decrees of God was to taſt of this bitter cup: *when he came into the world, he ſaid, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God*: his coming into the world was Heb. 10. 9. to do God's will; and his Father's will was, that he ſhould *drink of the cup of God's indignation, and ſuck out the very dregs thereof. By* this verſ. 10. *will we are ſanctified, thro' the offering of the body of Jeſus.* Unleſs therefore this will had been done, unleſs this offering had been made, we had not been ſanctified, and the immutable decrees of God for the redemption of mankind had been defeated. It was not therefore poſſible, that this cup ſhould paſs, yet it cannot be ſaid, that Chriſt pray'd in vain; it neceſſarily therefore follows that our Prayers may be of uſe, even where the particular requeſts we make to God are not granted. When *the hour* was *come, that the ſon of man* was to *be glorified*, our Saviour ſaid, *Now is my ſoul troubled, and what ſhall I ſay? Father,* Joh. 12. 27. *ſave me from this hour*; *but for this cauſe came I unto this* very *hour.* That hour he came unto, he prays to be ſav'd from; had he been ſav'd from it, God's name could not have been glorified; he prays at the ſame time, that God's name might be glorified; he therefore aſks ſomething that was not to be granted: this Prayer of Chriſt was not uſeleſs;

Prayer therefore may be uſeful, where the things pray'd for are not granted.

The Church hath taught us to pray every day, that "God would "keep us that day without ſin": notwithſtanding this daily Prayer, certain it is, that *in many things we offend all*; that none of us can ever reach to that heighth of perfection, as to ſay, *I have made my heart clean, I am pure from* all *ſin*; that *there is not a juſt man upon earth that doeth good, and ſinneth not*; that there is occaſion for our confeſſing our faults, as often as we pray for deliverance from all ſin; that therefore what we pray for, is not granted; and yet ſuch Prayer no one will raſhly condemn as uſeleſs, who conſiders that the ſame *David*, who *acknowledg'd his transgreſſions, and whoſe ſin was ever before him*, did however pray, that he might *keep God's law continually, for ever and ever.* If by ſuch Prayer we procure God's grace ſo far, as to make us better than we are, tho' not ſuch as we would be; if we are preſerv'd from any ſins by ſuch Prayer, into which we might have faln in failure of thoſe petitions, our Prayers are not unprofitable, tho' the preciſe gifts we pray for are not obtain'd.

Jam. 3. 2.
Prov. 20. 9.
Eccleſ. 7. 20.
Pſal. 51. 3.
Pſal. 119. 44.

If therefore there are other advantages in Prayer, beſides the obtaining our particular requeſts; if, where we pray for temporal bleſſings, the denial of them may be as great a benefit, as the grant of them; if inſtead of the mercy we pray for, we may receive an equivalent, or a greater; one of an higher value in it ſelf, or of much more uſe to us; if our Prayers may procure us the bleſſings of God, tho' not at preſent, yet in reverſion; if they may turn to our account at the great day of judgment, tho' we do not perceive any fruits of them during our pilgrimage here; if ſpiritual graces may be improv'd by our right performance of this duty, and ſome of theſe be better exercis'd when we perſevere in it, tho' our requeſts are not granted; if we have the unerring pattern of our bleſſed Saviour for praying even for thoſe gifts, which by our prayers are not to be obtain'd; then it is evident, that tho' our firſt Prayers ſhould not be heard; tho' our reiterated Prayers ſhould not prevail; tho' our requeſts after all ſhould not be granted; yet this doth not prove the unprofitableneſs of Prayer, ſince tho' God doth not grant the particular requeſts of ſuch as pray unto him, he may yet regard their Prayers.

What hath been ſaid will, I hope, appear ſufficient to take off the force of what is objected againſt Prayer, either from the reaſon of the thing, or from experience. For as to the arguments pretended to be brought from the reaſon of the thing, I have ſhew'd that the hearing of Prayer neceſſarily reſults from ſome of the attributes of God, and therefore cannot be inconſiſtent with any. I have ſhewn particularly, that it is not repugnant to the Immutability of God; that it argues no imperfection, no variableneſs, no change in God to be prevail'd upon by Prayer: that tho' change of reſolution in men, upon the importunity of others, may be a ſign of weakneſs, or inconſtancy, or imprudence in them, yet God may anſwer the requeſts of his ſupplicants without altering his purpoſe; that when he doth anſwer their requeſts, there is no change in him, but that all the change is in them. This hath been made out by proofs from reaſon, and by examples from Scripture; it hath been ſhewn, how thoſe attributes of God, which the objectors againſt Prayer would ſet at variance, may be fairly reconcil'd; that their cavils againſt the neceſſity of praying, becauſe God knows our neceſſities before re we ask, are cavils only, and no more; becauſe our asking is not eſign'd to inform him, but to expreſs our dependence on him; that e may neither relie upon our preſum'd worthineſs ſo far, as to expect receive without asking, becauſe God will judge none worthy, but thoſe ho ask; nor on the other ſide, ſo far be diſpirited by the ſenſe of our nworthineſs, as not to ask, becauſe our hopes of receiving are founded, ot upon our own worthineſs, but upon the goodneſs of God, and the erits of Chriſt; that therefore all that is offer'd from reaſon by the ob- ctors againſt the profitableneſs of Prayer, falls much ſhort of proving hat they pretend to prove.

And as to their objections taken from experience, it hath been ſhewn ou, that they are grounded upon ſuppoſals, which ought to be all true make their arguments concluſive, but are all falſe, ſo as to render heir objections ridiculous. For God may upon our perſeverance in rayer, hear thoſe Prayers, which in our firſt approaches to him he oth not anſwer; or, tho' ſome ſorts of Prayers ſhould not prevail with od to grant our requeſts, yet others may; or tho' none ſhould, yet od may, without granting our particular requeſts, ſhew, that he re- ards our Prayers.

Not to hear our Prayers at preſent, and yet to hear them afterwards, agreeable with the wiſdom of God; to reject ſome Prayers, and to ccept others, is eſſential to his holineſs; to deny what we think fit for us, and to grant what he knows to be convenient for us, is a demonſtration of his mercy. Neither therefore God's ſeeming diſregard of our firſt Prayers; nor his open abhorrence of ſome ſorts of Prayers; nor his peremptory denial of the requeſts of ſuch as pray unto him, prove the unprofitableneſs of Prayer. If our firſt Prayers are not heard, we have recourſe to repeated Prayers; if the ſame Prayers repeated do not prevail, we have hopes of prevailing by better Prayers ſubſtituted in their room; if no Prayers are effectual for obtaining what we ask, we have ſtill reaſon to be ſatisfied, that our Prayers may be profitable to us, tho' our particular requeſts are not granted.

If our firſt Prayers are rejected, we can give a good account of their rejection, without allowing the unprofitableneſs of Prayer. For we may ſatisfie our ſelves, that Prayer doth not for its own ſake deſerve an immediate grant, and that therefore 'tis not unjuſt in God to deny our firſt petitions; that God hath no where promiſ'd to hear our firſt Prayers, and that therefore it is no ways repugnant to his veracity to ſuſpend his grant; that it depends upon his free bounty, whether he will at laſt grant our requeſts, or not; and that therefore we ought to adore his goodneſs, if he vouchſafes to hear us even upon our repeated Prayers; that there may be many good reaſons unknown to us, why God ſhould not hear our firſt Prayers; that there are alſo many good reaſons aſſignable by us, why he ſhould not anſwer them; that by ſuch delay of God's mercies our patience is exercis'd, our carnal deſires mortified, our faith tried, our humility improv'd, our truſt in God ſhewn, our ſubmiſſion to his will manifeſted, our value for his mercies heightned, and our entire dependence on his bounty and goodneſs clearly demonſtrated; that we cannot from the rejection of our firſt Prayers deſpair of the acceptance of our renew'd addreſſes, becauſe we have in Scripture frequent inſtances of the power and efficacy of reiterated Prayers; that the greateſt favourites of heaven have not been heard at the firſt inſtance, and that the moſt unworthy ſupplicants upon earth have been heard for their importunity; that upon all theſe conſiderations we ought to perſevere in Prayer, tho' our firſt Prayers are not heard, and not to doubt, but the ſame Prayers repeated will be effectual. But if the ſame Prayers repeated ſhould ſtill be unavailable for obtaining what we ask, we may then conſider, that the promiſes of God are not made to all ſorts of Prayer indiſcriminately, but only to ſome particular ſorts of Prayer; that the qualifications, God requires in an acceptable Prayer, are ſet out in Scripture, and that our repeated Prayers may have miſcarried, for wanting all, or any of theſe neceſſary qualifications; that purity of intention, entire truſt in God, ſteady application of thought, a fervent warmth of affection, a profound humility of ſoul are the properties of an effectual Prayer; that therefore if in our repeated Prayers we have either propos'd to our ſelves ſiniſter ends, or have knowingly and willingly ſuffer'd our thoughts to wander, or have waver'd in our minds thro' want of faith; or have been unconcern'd and indifferent about the ſucceſs of our Prayers, or have been proud and conceited in depending upon our own merits and deſerts, we can give our ſelves an account why our paſt Prayers have not been heard, which will not hold concerning future Prayers, which may be clear from theſe defects; that a vicious life may be a bar to the prevalency of our Prayers, which being remov'd, they may recover their efficacy; that therefore, tho' ſome ſorts of Prayers may not avail for the obtaining what we ask, yet other and better Prayers ſubſtituted in their room may be effectual.

But if other and better Prayers ſubſtituted in the room of thoſe which had before miſcarried, ſhould ſtill prove ſucceſsleſs; if we ſhould not be conſcious to our ſelves, that our Prayers wanted any of thoſe properties, which are requiſite to an acceptable Prayer, and yet our requeſts ſhould not be granted; we have yet this conſideration to ſupport us, that there are other advantages in Prayer, beſides the obtaining what we ask; that tho' the particular good things we pray for are not granted, other and better things may thro' our Prayers be vouchſaf'd to us; that we are not ſo proper judges of what in the event will prove convenient for us, as God is; that he may, when he denies what we ask, grant to us what we more want; that the denial of our requeſts may be the effect, not of his diſpleaſure, but of his abundant mercy; that by denying our requeſts he may better exerciſe our chriſtian graces, than he could do by granting them; that a temporal bleſſing, which is not vouchſaf'd us at our requeſt, might be prejudicial to our ſpiritual eſtate; that a temporal calamity, which is not remov'd at our deſire, may promote our eternal welfare; that, tho' we reap no benefit from our Prayers at preſent, we may have bleſſings in ſtore laid up for us in return to our conſtant Prayers againſt the great day of retribution; that therefore, tho' our firſt, tho' our repeated, tho' all our Prayers ſhould be ineffectual for obtaining what we ask, it is ſtill a ſure and undoubted truth, that Prayers are profitable.

And now, my dearly beloved brethren, having thus largely, fully, and, I hope, ſatisfactorily clear'd the duty of Prayer from the falſe aſperſions of impious men, as if it were an unprofitable labour, and uſeleſs drudgery, I may with the more confidence of ſucceſs exhort you all, thro' the bowels of Chriſt, to a conſtant and unwearied practice of it.

Prayer hath that univerſal influence on all other religious duties, that it is in Scripture very frequently taken for the whole ſervice we

owe

we to God. To go no farther than my Text, the bold objectors againſt
rayer thus word their impious expoſtulation; *What is the Almighty,*
hat we ſhould ſerve him, or what profit ſhould we have, if we pray
nto him? So that to lay aſide Prayer, and to caſt off all ſenſe of Reli-
ion, are in the notions of theſe men one and the ſame. And indeed
is very difficult to conceive, that any who profeſs to believe in God,
hom they acknowledge to be Almighty, and for that reaſon able to ſup-
y the wants of all his creatures; and infinitely gracious, and therefore
illing to anſwer the ſupplications of all thoſe who depend upon him,
ould yet be ſo far wanting to their duty, and to their intereſt, as not
equently to call upon him. But it is ſtill more unconceivable, that
oſe, who profeſs faith in Chriſt, and have had aſſurance from him, that
hatſoever they ask in God's name, that he will grant; that thoſe, who
elieve they have a powerful Mediator with God, who *is able to ſave* Heb. 7. 25.
hem to the uttermoſt that come unto God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth
make interceſſion for them, ſhould make no advantage of theſe glo-
ous privileges, but for want of praying to God thro' Chriſt, ſhould
ut themſelves out from the benefits of his mediation. For tho' our
viour hath by his death, and his interceſſion in vertue of that, pur-
as'd God's bleſſings in our behalf; yet we have no aſſurance, that theſe
all be our portion, unleſs we become petitioners at the throne of God
them: for *this is the confidence we have in* Chriſt, *that if we ask* 1 Joh. 5. 14.
y thing according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know, he
eareth us, we know farther, that whatſoever we ask, we have the peti-
ions, that we deſire of him. But we have no reaſon hence to preſume,
at *it ſhall be given* to us, tho' *we ask* not; that we *ſhall find* what we
ek not, or that the gate of heaven, tho' we *knock* not, *ſhall* of it ſelf
open'd unto us.

Now if the mercies of God are by the help of Prayer thus plenti-
lly deriv'd on men; if this channel can't be ſtopt up, but the free cur-
nt of God's bleſſings muſt forthwith fail, let us not be ſo treacherous
our own ſouls, ſo negligent of our intereſts, ſo improvident of our
elfare and happineſs, as not to make uſe of thoſe eaſie means of ob-
ining that help, which God in compaſſion to our wants hath put in-
our hands. Since God hath declar'd, that *the Prayer of the upright* Prov. 15. 8.
his delight; ſince *every good and perfect gift is from above, and com-* Jam. 1. 17.
th down from the Father of lights, who, the more infinite and un-
ounded his goodneſs is, the more he takes pleaſure in imparting of
is fulneſs to the ſons of men; let us ſhew our concurrence with the
racious deſigns of God in procuring for our ſelves and others, by right-
y qualified Prayers, that communication of his mercies, in which his
eneficent nature doth ſo much delight: and ſince we not only have a
racious God, *who heareth Prayers,* when offer'd in a due and right
anner, but alſo a merciful Redeemer, *thro'* whom *we have acceſs un-* Epheſ. 2. 18.
the Father; *having therefore, brethren, boldneſs to enter into the* Heb. 10. 19.
olieſt by the blood of Jeſus, let us draw near with a true heart in full verſ. 22.
ſſurance of faith, having our hearts ſprinkled from an evil conſcience;
raying always with all Prayer, and ſupplication in the Spirit, and Epheſ. 6. 18.
atching thereunto with all perſeverance.

Preach'd at St. *Dunſtan's* in the *Weſt*, February 15, 170⅞. The firſt Sermon his Lordſhip preach'd at his Lecture there.

SERMON VI.

Of praying for God's Miniſters.

II Cor. I. 11.

You alſo helping together by Prayer for us, that for the gift beſtowed upon us by the means of many perſons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

SAINT *Paul* had in the verſes foregoing the words, which I
have now read unto you, related to the Saints of the Church
of *Corinth*, how many, how grievous, how unſufferable af-
flictions he had undergone, did ſtill grapple with, and expect-
ed for the time to come to endure, for the ſake of Chriſt, and
of his Goſpel. He particularly takes notice to them of a *trouble, which*
had lately *come to him in Aſia*, probably the perſecution which was
rais'd againſt him at *Epheſus* by *Demetrius*, and by his party, in be-
v. 8. half of their Goddeſs *Diana*, in which he was *preſs'd out of meaſure,*
above ſtrength, inſomuch that he *deſpair'd even of life*. His danger was
ſo great, that no power, leſs than almighty, could have reſcued him;
none was able to have prevented his death, but the ſame God, which
v. 9. could alſo have reviv'd him, if dead: *We had the ſentence of death in*
our ſelves, that we ſhould not truſt in our ſelves, but in God which
raiſeth the dead. This almighty power, in which he plac'd his confi-
dence, did graciouſly interpoſe between him and danger; and the expe-
rience of God's favour and protection in this heavy preſſure did ſtrengthen
his aſſurance and reliance upon the goodneſs of God, for ſuccour and
v. 10. preſervation in all future trials: God, ſaith he, *deliver'd us from ſo*
great a death, and doth deliver; *in whom we truſt, that he will yet*
deliver us. For this his entire truſt in God he had very good and firm
grounds; for he was call'd to the work, in which he was now engag'd,
by a voice from heaven; and he could not doubt, but God would give
him life and ſtrength to execute that work, to which he had ſo mira-
culouſly call'd him; God's honour was concern'd in the accompliſhment
of this work, and he knew God would not be wanting in the advance-
ment

ent of his own glory; Chriſt had come down from heaven to reveal
hat Goſpel, which St. *Paul* now preach'd; and he was aſcended up again
nto heaven, there to intercede with God in behalf of that Church,
which he had purchas'd with his own blood; and to pour down from
hence thoſe gifts of the Spirit, which were neceſſary to the effectual
preading of the Goſpel. To Chriſt *all power* was *given* both *in heaven*
d earth, and he was ready to delegate to all his Miniſters as much
f that power, as was requiſite to qualifie them for a due diſcharge of
heir Miniſtry. But *God* had peculiarly *choſen Paul, that* he *ſhould* Acts 22. 14, 15.
ow his will, and ſee that Juſt one, and hear the voice of his mouth,
d *be his witneſs unto all men, of what* he had *ſeen and heard.* This
poſtle therefore had good reaſon to be aſſur'd, that God, who had thus
onderfully choſen him *to know his will,* would go along with him,
nd aſſiſt him in the declaration of it to others; that *that Juſt one,*
hom he had ſeen, and whoſe voice he had heard from heaven calling
pon him not to perſecute his Church, would be preſent with him, and
ould protect him, when he was now engag'd in the ſervice of it; that
e, who had appointed him *his witneſs unto all men, of what he had*
en and heard, would not ſuffer him to periſh, till he had bore this
ſtimony to all thoſe nations, to whom he was ſent; that Chriſt, who
d *ſhewn him, how great things he muſt ſuffer for* his *names ſake,* Acts 9. 16.
ould ſtrengthen, and ſupport him under all thoſe ſufferings, which he
as to undergo for his ſake. But tho' our Apoſtle had all theſe reaſons
rely upon the goodneſs of God, and to expect aſſiſtance from heaven;
et in order to obtain God's help and protection, he thought it neceſſa-
y, that it ſhould be implor'd by ſupplications and Prayers; and, leſt his
wn addreſſes to the throne of grace ſhould not be prevalent enough
procure the aid, which he wanted, he recommends himſelf to the
rayers of the faithful, and earneſtly requeſts of them, that they alſo
ould pray for him; on their interceſſions he depends, as a powerful
eans to obtain that deliverance, which he was ſo fully aſſur'd of; *In*
im we truſt, that he will yet deliver us: *you alſo helping together by*
Prayer for us, that for the gift beſtowed upon us by the means of many
rſons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

WHICH words will afford us theſe following obſervations:

I. THE Prayers of God's people in behalf of God's Miniſters are very prevalent with God to procure from him thoſe gifts, which are neceſſary for the faithful diſcharge of their Miniſtry.

II. IT is the duty of God's people thus to help together by Prayers for God's Miniſters.

III. IT will be for the advantage of God's people thus to help together by Prayer for God's Miniſters.

OUR firſt obſervation is this,

THE Prayers of God's people in behalf of God's Miniſters are very prevalent with God to procure from him thoſe gifts, which are neceſſa-
y for the faithful diſcharge of their Miniſtry.

IF there were not a great efficacy in thoſe Prayers, which God's people offer up in behalf of thoſe, under whoſe Miniſtry they are plac'd, we could give no account why St. *Paul,* who abounded, as much as any one ever did, in all Miniſterial gifts, and who had as good a perſonal title, as any one ever had, to God's gracious aſſiſtances, ſhould ſo frequently and ſo earneſtly, as he doth, deſire the Prayers of the faithful in his behalf. There is no requeſt, which he more often repeats; none, which he more importunately ſollicits, thro' all his Epiſtles, than this, that thoſe, to whom he writes, would be mindful to pray to God for him. That we may ſee, how great a ſtreſs he lays upon this, and of how great importance he thought it, to the due execution of his Apoſtolical office, it may not be improper to point out to you thoſe ſeveral paſſages of his writings, where this his reiterated deſire is worthy of our notice, upon this very account, that it is ſo often reiterated. With what vehemence, what earneſtneſs, what perſwaſive words doth he enforce this petition to the *Romans*, when he *beſeeches* them as *brethren for the Lord Jeſus Chriſt's ſake, and for the love of the Spirit, that* they would *ſtrive together with* him *in* their *Prayers to God for* him? It could be no ordinary favour, no cheap inſtance of friendſhip, no inconſiderable benefit, in which he thus intereſted *the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the Spirit of love.* Rom. 15.30

No one did with more undaunted courage preach the Goſpel of Chriſt, no one did with more unwearied patience bear perſecutions for the ſake of the Goſpel, than our Apoſtle did; and yet he ſtill had recourſe to the interceſſions of the Saints, to obtain of God greater meaſures of courage, and higher degrees of heroick fortitude and magnanimity. In the 6th chapter to the *Epheſians*, v. 18. he exhorts them to *pray alway with all Prayer and ſupplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunt with all perſeverance, and ſupplication, as for all ſaints* in general, ſ more particularly for him, *that utterance* might *be given unto* him, *that* he might *open* his *mouth boldly, to make known the myſtery of the Goſpel,* that Goſpel, *for which* he was at that very time, when he thus beſpeaks their Prayers, *an embaſſador in bonds, that therein,* as he had hitherto ſpoke, ſo he might ſtill go on to *ſpeak boldly, as* he *ought to ſpeak.* He knew that the maſter, whom he ſerv'd, was a gracious and kind maſter, and that no ſervice, which he could do him, would be loſt, or fail of an exceeding and over-proportion'd reward; and yet, as if this recompence was not to be hop'd for, but thro' the interceſſion of others; as if the promiſes of God, and the conſciouſneſs of his own fidelity, were not ſufficient to work in him a firm aſſurance of everlaſting happineſs, without the Prayers of the Saints concurring with his own endeavours, we find him thus expreſſing his hopes of the mercy of God thro' the prevalency of their Prayers: *I know,* ſaith he to the *Philippians,* c. 1. v. 19. *that this ſhall turn to my ſalvation through your Prayer, and the ſupply of the Spirit of Jeſus Chriſt.* The ſame application, which we before obſerv'd to have been made by him to the Chriſtians of *Epheſus,* is alſo made in almoſt the ſame words to the Chriſtians of *Coloſſe*: *Continue in Prayer, and watch in the ſame with thankſgiving; withal praying alſo for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to ſpeak the myſtery of Chriſt, for which I am alſo in bonds; that I may make it manifeſt, as I ought to ſpeak.* In the like manner, after our Apoſtle had beſtow'd his paternal benediction upon the brethren of *Theſſalonica,* he doth require from them, as it were in return for his Prayers in their behalf, that they ſhould pray unto God in his. With a bleſſing the 2d chapter of his 2d Epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians* ends: *Now our Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlaſting conſolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and eſtabliſh you in every good word and work.* c. 4. 2, 3, 4.

nd with a requeſt of a reciprocal bleſſing the 3d chapter of the ſame piſtle begins; *Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the ord may have free courſe, and be glorified even as it is with you.*

In the Epiſtle to *Philemon*, ſhort as it is, our Apoſtle omits not mong the favours, which he asks for his late convert *Oneſimus* with ſo uch art, and ſuch an air of inſinuation, and ſo dextrous a way of per- ading, he forgets not, I ſay, to intimate to him, that there was one vour to himſelf, which he alſo expected from him, to wit, the bene- of his Prayers. And I don't know, whether amongſt the other ar- uments that are brought to prove St. *Paul* the author of the Epiſtle to e *Hebrews*, there may not be ſome little force in this obſervation, at this requeſt of St. *Paul*, which we have found to run thro' his other ritings, is alſo met with in that Epiſtle. *Pray for us*, ſaith the writer f that Letter, *for we truſt, we have a good conſcience, in all things illing to live honeſtly. But I beſeech you the rather to do this, that may be reſtored to you the ſooner.* We have found this requeſt to oc- ur ſo often in the writings of St. *Paul*, that what he ſaith of the bene- iction, with which he ſhuts up his Epiſtles, ſeems applicable alſo to is his petition, that they would pray for him; it *is the token in eve- y Epiſtle*; *ſo he writes.* And I have choſe to bring together in one iew all theſe ſeveral teſtimonies, that you might be convinc'd from is his requeſt recurring ſo frequently, that it was not thrown out at andom; and may be aſſur'd from its being preſs'd ſo ſolemnly, that it as not intended for an empty and ſuperficial form.

Hebr. 13. 18, 19.

2 Theſſ. 3. 17.

Now what can be a better proof of the efficacy of ſuch Prayers, an that they were ſo frequently, ſo fervently deſir'd by this eminent poſtle? Would he have been ſo ſollicitous to have ſo many interceſſors for him at the throne of grace, had he not known, that ſuch interceſſions were of great weight and force? Was it, think we, out of ſenſe of his own deficiency, that he had recourſe to the Prayers of he Church, which other perſons of greater abilities might not have ſo much need of? But did he not excell in all natural, and ſupernatural gifts? And if the Prayers of the faithful might ever be ſuperſeded, as nneceſſary, may we not reaſonably think, that St. *Paul* had as little occaſion to have recourſe to any needleſs or ſuperfluous means of obtaining God's aſſiſtance for the diſcharge of his Miniſtry, as any other Miniſter of the Goſpel ever had? If ſuch Miniſterial gifts were to be obtain'd by inceſſant labour, by hard ſtudy, by a great compaſs of learning, by the cloſeſt application, by the moſt earneſt endeavours, by the moſt fervent Prayers of that perſon, who was to be adorn'd with them, St. *Paul* had upon all theſe accounts an unqueſtionable title to them. When therefore he made uſe of all theſe means to acquire ſuch gifts, and did over and above call in the aid of others, and implore the benefit of their Prayers for him, what, can we think, ſhould be the reaſon of this his conduct, but that he well knew, there was a peculiar energy in ſuch united Prayers?

May we not upon good grounds attribute the great ſucceſs of St. *Paul*'s Miniſtry to thoſe Prayers, which being ſo often by him ask'd, we cannot doubt were made without ceaſing in all Churches unto God for him? May we not impute the ſmall ſucceſs, which our Miniſtry meets with in this degenerate age, as to other cauſes, ſo alſo in ſome meaſure to this, that the zeal, wherewith the firſt Chriſtians pray'd to God for a bleſſing upon his Miniſters, is, if not totally extinguiſh'd, yet very much abated? Might we not with ſome degree of confidence promiſe our ſelves, that if this zeal could be again reviv'd, if the people of God in our times could be prevail'd upon to pray for their Paſtors with as great warmth and devotion, with as great frequency and earneſtneſs, as the firſt Chriſtians did for theirs, our Miniſtry might be more effectual to thoſe ends, for which it was ordain'd of God, than it now is? That ye may be prevail'd upon to exert that power of drawing down the bleſſings of God upon his Miniſters, which our firſt head hath ſhewn to go along with your Prayers, I proceed now in the

Second PLACE to ſhew, that it is the duty of God's people thus to help together by their Prayers for God's Miniſters.

AND we need no other proof of their being oblig'd thus to pray for their Paſtors, than this one conſideration, which we have hitherto dwelt upon, to wit, that their Prayers for them are of ſo great force and efficacy. For if the benefit, which they may procure by their Prayers, is ſo great; if it may be purchas'd at ſo cheap a price; if all Chriſtians are oblig'd to *do* all the *good*, they can, *to all men*; if they are ſtill more ſtrictly oblig'd to promote the good of thoſe, *who are of the houſhold of faith*; and if thoſe, who are the ſtewards of this houſhold, have a ſtill more equitable right and title to all the offices of love and charity, of friendſhip and benevolence, which thoſe under their Miniſtry can ſhew to them; then muſt it be acknowledg'd to be the indiſpenſable duty of thoſe, who are taught in the Word, to reach out unto him, that teacheth them, the benefit of their Prayers. We think our ſelves bound to pray for thoſe, whom we honour, whom we love, and for whom we are afraid. We pray for kings, for Princes, for our Governors, for our Parents, for our Superiors, out of the honour and reverence we have for their characters: we pray for our brethren, our friends, our benefactors, out of the love and affection we bear to them: we pray for thoſe, who are in danger, and preſs'd with great difficulties, out of the compaſſionate concern we have for them, and a fear leſt they ſhould miſcarry: and upon all theſe accounts the Miniſters of God may juſtly challenge a place in the Prayers of their people; the dignity of their office entitles them to reverence; the benefit, which is deriv'd from their Miniſtration, makes them deſerve love; and the difficulties of their work, and perils they are expos'd to, beſpeak ſome pity and compaſſion.

Gal. 6. 10.

IT would be eaſie to ſhew the eminent dignity of their office from the magnificent titles, wherewith it is adorn'd in holy Writ; from the many precepts, which are there given, to reverence thoſe, who are advanc'd to it; from the ſevere puniſhments, that have been inflicted by God's vengeance on thoſe, who have expreſs'd a contempt of his Miniſters; from the great honours, that have been paid them by thoſe, who have been moſt eminent for virtue and piety; from the great immunities and privileges, with which all wiſe governments have always dignified and diſtinguiſh'd thoſe, who have officiated in ſacred things; and from the great and honourable things, we find ſpoke by the beſt and moſt judicious writers, as well Heathen, as Jewiſh and Chriſtian, of this venerable order; but this is an invidious ſubject, and for that reaſon leſs proper for us to enlarge on. I ſhall diſmiſs it therefore with this one reflection, that tho' a great deal of wit hath been employ'd to render this function contemptible and ridiculous; tho' this wit hath been ſharpned by malice; and tho' thro' the malignity of our nature, we are apt to be much better pleas'd with ſatyr, than with praiſe; yet a man who has

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ny true taſt of writing, ſhall find more life and ſpirit, more wit and fan- y, more vivacity of imagination and beauty of expreſſion in thoſe en- omiums, which have been made in former ages upon this order, than e to be met with in the moſt witty invectives againſt it, which this ge has produc'd. Inſtances of this kind might be fetch'd from the beſt aſſick writers, Greek and Roman; but in this place it may be more itable to refer you to thoſe panegyricks, which we find in the Son of *irach* upon *Aaron, Phinees,* and other Prieſts, particularly to that up- n *Simon* the high Prieſt the Son of *Onias,* which you will meet with *Eccleſiaſticus* c. 50. *How was he honoured,* ſaith he, *in the midſt of e people, in his coming out of the ſanctuary? He was as the morning ar in the midſt of a cloud, and as the moon at the full: as the ſun ining upon the temple of the moſt High, and as the rainbow giving light the bright clouds.* That author goes on there with great variety of hought and language to compare him to ſuch things, as are moſt beau- ful and admir'd in nature, and in art, in order to excite in the mind his reader an high and awful regard to the prieſtly character.

But, as I ſaid, I chooſe rather to ground the title of God's Miniſters o the Prayers of their people upon your love and pity for them, than pon the eſteem and reverence, which it is more proper for others to y them, than for them to prove their due. This affection ſeems owing o them, if not for their own perſonal merits, which may not deſerve it; et on account of thoſe bleſſings, which God is pleas'd to diſpenſe by hem. It is in view of theſe, that our Apoſtle St. *Paul beſeeches* the 1 Theſſ. 5.12, 13. *rethren to know them which labour among* them, *and are over* them *the Lord, and admoniſh* them; *and to eſteem them very highly in love r their works ſake.* Theſe meſſengers of God will deſerve kind treatment on account of him, by whom they are ſent, and of that welcome meſſage which they bring. *Beautiful upon the mountains are the* very Iſai. 52. 7. *feet of him, that bringeth good tidings, that publiſheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publiſheth ſalvation, that ſaith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.* By the hands of theſe his Miniſters God doth ordidinarily convey to his choſen ones thoſe means of grace, and hopes of glory, which his Son purchas'd by his death. Chriſt, *when he aſcended* Epheſ. 4. 8. *up on high,* and *led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men,* did not only appoint *Apoſtles,* and *Prophets,* and *Evangeliſts,* for the firſt found- v. 11. ing of his Church, but alſo *Paſtors* and *Teachers,* who thro' all ages of it ſhould ſucceed each other, *for the perfecting of the ſaints, for the* v. 12. 13. *work of the miniſtry, for the edifying of the body of Chriſt; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt.*

By faith we are ſav'd; and the ordinary means of begetting, of nouriſhing, and of encreaſing faith is by the preaching of God's Word. *Who-* Rom. 10. 13, 14. *ſoever ſhall call upon the name of the Lord, ſhall be ſaved.* But *how ſhall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? And how ſhall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? And how ſhall they hear without a Preacher?* The preaching of God's Word is not only neceſſary for the converſion of thoſe, who are out of the Church, in order to ingenerate in them the firſt beginnings of faith; but it is alſo neceſſary for the improvement of thoſe, who are born within the pale of Chriſt's Church, and educated in the true faith, in order to confirm them therein, and to ſtrengthen *and eſtabliſh* them *in every good work.* It is an ordinance appointed by God for the prevention of error, and for the augmentation of grace. Our Apoſtle hath aſſign'd theſe two ends, for which Chriſt inſtituted Paſtors and Teachers,

Epheſ. 4. 14. *Firſt*, THAT thoſe who are under their miniſtry, may *be no more children, toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the ſleight of men, and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* And

v. 15. *Secondly*, THAT *ſpeaking the truth in love*, they *may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Chriſt.*

NOW if faith and charity, if freedom from error, and growth in grace, are propagated by the Miniſters of the Goſpel; if ſpiritual knowledge, whereby to diſcern their duty, is by God convey'd to men by the Word, which his Miniſters preach; and if ſpiritual ſtrength to perform their duty is communicated by thoſe Sacraments, which they adminiſter; if they are appointed by God as Guides, to direct his people in the right way to heaven; as Paſtors, to feed his flock; as Watchmen, to ſpy out and prevent any danger, that might ſurpriſe his Church; as Stewards, to take care of thoſe of his houſhold; if ſo many, and ſo valuable bleſſings are imparted to the people of God by theſe his Inſtruments; then will they upon theſe accounts deſerve the love of thoſe, to whom their Miniſtry is thus ſerviceable; and that love will expreſs it ſelf, as in other acts, ſo particularly in praying to God for thoſe, by whom God doth thus plentifully beſtow his mercies and loving kindneſſes upon them.

IT is one part of the Miniſterial function to bleſs God's people; thoſe whom they bleſs in God's name, God hath promis'd, that he will bleſs; that benediction, which they pronounce, he beſtows. But tho this authoritative benediction is peculiar to them; yet a ſupplication for a bleſſing may without uſurpation be us'd, and cannot without unthankfulneſs be refus'd by private perſons in behalf of thoſe, whom God hath appointed to bleſs them. Thoſe Prayers, which God's Miniſters pour forth for the people, are effectual with God for the averting his heavy judgments, and the procuring his wonderful mercies; and for theſe the people cannot make a more ſuitable return, than by reciprocally praying for theſe their Interceſſors.

AND if the conſideration of thoſe advantages, which God's people reap from the Miniſtry of their Paſtors, engages them to pray for them out of love and gratitude; the weightineſs of their charge, the great difficulty of executing it, as they ought, and the great peril that attends their not executing it, are no leſs powerful motives to engage all good Chriſtians to pray for them out of pity and compaſſion. The more eminent their dignity is, and the more beneficial their work is, if rightly perform'd, the greater danger do thoſe, who aſſume this dignity, and undertake this work, expoſe themſelves to, if they are guilty of any thing, which may bring a blemiſh upon this ſacred function, or if they do this work of the Lord deceitfully. It was a very provoking ſin in the ſons of *Eli* to make themſelves vile, becauſe they thereby vilified the holy ordinances of God: *The ſin of the young men was very great before the Lord*, ſaith the Text, *for men abhorred the Offering of the Lord.* 1 Sam. 2. 17.

WHEN our Apoſtle St. *Paul* conſider'd the different effects of his Miniſtry, according to the different diſpoſitions which it ſhould meet with; when he obſerv'd, that tho' to ſome he was *the ſavour of life unto life*, yet to others he was a *ſavour of death unto death*; out of a deep ſenſe of the difficulty of his taſk, and his own weakneſs, he cried out, *Who* 2 Cor. 2. 16.

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s *ſufficient for theſe things*? And unpardonable muſt be the preſumption
f that man, who thinks himſelf enough qualified for a charge, for
which St. *Paul* was in his own opinion inſufficient. Neceſſary it is, that
e fly unto God for the pardon of our defects, and for a ſupply of his
race; neceſſary it is, that we beſeech all good Chriſtians, that they
ould joyn their Prayers with ours, that we, who are not *ſufficient of* 2 Cor. 3,5,6.
ur ſelves, may, by that *ſufficiency* which *is of God*, be *made able Mi-*
iſters of the New Teſtament. And if they have any reverence for us
n account of our holy function, any love to us for our work's ſake,
any fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies in conſide- Philip. 2. 1.
ation of our danger, they will think it an act of juſtice and of charity
arneſtly to pray unto God, that his *Thummim*, and his *Urim*, integri- Deut. 33. 8.
y of life, and ſoundneſs of doctrine may *be with* his *holy Ones*; that
hey may faithfully *teach Jacob* God's *judgments, and Iſrael* his *law*; v. 10, 11.
hat the *Lord* would *bleſs* their labours, *and accept the work of* their
ands; that he would pour down upon them the liberal effuſions of his
race, that they may *take heed unto* themſelves, and *unto* their *doctrine*, 1 Tim. 4. 16.
nd that *in* ſo *doing*, they may *both ſave* themſelves, *and thoſe that*
ear them. And this duty of praying for God's Miniſters all good
hriſtians will be the readier to perform, becauſe, as we obſerv'd in
he

Third PLACE, it will be for their own advantage thus to help toge-
her by Prayer for thoſe, whom God hath appointed to watch over
heir ſouls; and that upon two accounts, as this praying for their Pa-
ors hath a natural tendency to make them profit more by the Mini-
ry of thoſe, whom they thus pray for; and as it hath a ſupernatural
fficacy to derive a bleſſing upon their Miniſters, and thereby to make
heir Miniſtry more effectual.

AND *Firſt*, Theſe Prayers of the people for their Paſtors have a natural
endency to make them profit more by their Miniſtry. For he who is
trictly careful in private and in publick, in his cloſet-retirements and
n the aſſembly of the Saints, to lift up his hands and his heart to God
n behalf of God's Miniſters, will have a proportionable reſpect and vene-
ation for that Word, which is by them preach'd; he will look upon it as
he light of his underſtanding, and the food of his ſoul; as that remedy,
which God has appointed for the cure of all his ſpiritual infirmities,
nd as the ſtay and ſupport of his ſpiritual life. He will attend carefully
o the Word of God preach'd unto him by his ſervants, as an ordinance
ſtabliſh'd by the divine wiſdom, for conveying unto him the knowledge
f every thing, which God has done by his Son, and of every thing which
God by his Son requires him to do, for the accompliſhment of his ſalva-
ion. He will be ſollicitous to apprehend, to learn, and to treaſure up
n his memory thoſe ſacred truths, which are the moſt certain, the moſt
ublime, the moſt uſeful and important, that the ſoul of man is capa-
le of. He will, with great greedineſs and alacrity, gather this divine
Manna, this true bread of heaven, this fruitful ſeed of glory and im-
ortality. When he receives the Word of God, which he hears from
he mouth of his authoriz'd Miniſters, he will *receive it, not as the* 1 Theſ. 2. 13.
word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually
worketh alſo in them that believe. He will remember, that in the con-
truction of Chriſt, *he that receiveth* thoſe, whom Chriſt hath ſent, by Mat. 10. 40.
hearkning to their meſſage, *doth receive* Chriſt himſelf, who ſent them.
He will look upon every lawful Miniſter of God's Word, who is regu-

larly appointed by thoſe, whom Chriſt hath authoriz'd to ſend *labourers into his vineyard*, as a Teacher, *not of men, neither by man, but by Jeſus Chriſt, and God the Father, who rais'd him from the dead.* Gal. 1. 1.

He will ſeriouſly conſider, that the Goſpel, which is preach'd by them, is not after man; for they who preach it, neither receive it of man, nor are they taught it, but by the written revelation of Jeſus Chriſt. He will not deſpiſe the ineſtimable treaſure of divine wiſdom for the 2 Cor. 4. 7. ſake of thoſe *earthen veſſels*, in which it is convey'd to him; but will rather honour thoſe veſſels, how mean and contemptible ſoever in themſelves, for the ſake of that rich *treaſure*, which they convey. He will be careful to avoid thoſe ſnares, which the devil lays in the way of God's people, when he endeavours to draw off their attention to the Word preach'd, by fixing it on the weakneſſes and defects of the Preacher. He will not eaſily permit himſelf to be carried away by a vain ſpirit of criticiſm, which will not ſuffer one falſe reaſoning, one low thought, one mean compariſon, one unaccurate expreſſion to eſcape his obſervation and cenſure. He will conſider, that he is not now in the Theatre, but in the Church; that he came not hither for entertainment, but for edification; that it is not the buſineſs, and ſhould not be the aim of a Preacher to pleaſe his ear, and to divert his fancy, but to inform his judgment, and to mind him of his duty: he will therefore call off his thoughts from obſerving any failures there may be in the language, in the method, in the manner of him, who ſpeaks, and will apply them wholly to thoſe ſolid truths and uſeful inſtructions, which a well-diſpos'd hearer can ſcarce ever be at a loſs to find in the moſt negligent, and leaſt judicious diſcourſes of thoſe, who ſincerely handle the Word of God. He will attend more to the matter and ſubſtance of what is taught, than to the air and tone of the Preacher; and whilſt his inſtructions are, 2 Cor. 10. 10. like thoſe of St. *Paul, weighty and powerful*, he will not object againſt him, as we find ſome did againſt St. *Paul*, that *his bodily preſence is weak, and his ſpeech contemptible.* He will conſider, that all the defects of the Preacher can't hurt him, unleſs he himſelf pleaſes; and that the wholſome truths, which he delivers, may ſave him, if he pleaſes; that therefore he is bound in charity to overlook thoſe, but that he cannot, without danger to his own ſoul, neglect or deſpiſe theſe.

Being thus perſwaded he will not be over-haſty to paſs a ſevere judgment upon the performance of his Paſtor, but will leave him to give an account of his talents to that Maſter, from whom he receiv'd them. He will in the mean time prepare himſelf to make up his own account of the improvement of all thoſe means of grace, which God has afforded him. And ſince God is pleas'd to make uſe of the meaneſt inſtruments to advance the great work of men's ſalvation, and to ſhew himſelf ſtrong, when thoſe, by whom he operates, are moſt weak; the humble and devout Chriſtian will think it his bounden duty to lay hold of every opportunity, which God gives him, of growing in knowledge and goodneſs; and will not therefore let ſlip any of thoſe Goſpel-truths, which ſuch a Preacher ſhall deliver, any of thoſe ſolid proofs of them, which he ſhall bring, any of thoſe wholſome inſtructions, which may make him better know his duty, any of thoſe powerful motives, which may excite him to the diſcharge of it.

Thus doth it appear, that the Prayers of God's people for their Paſtors have a natural tendency to make them profit more by their Miniſtry; becauſe the ſame reverence, the ſame affection, the ſame com-ſſion, which incline them to pray for their Miniſters, do at the ſame me diſpoſe them to hear the Word of God with meekneſs and humili- , with attention and reſpect, with candour and fairneſs, with a de- e of being rather profited, than pleas'd thereby; without diſtaſt or pre- dice againſt the Preacher, nay, with ſome degrees of favour and good ill towards him; all which diſpoſitions do wonderfully fit and prepare e mind for improvement under any Miniſtry.

But over and above this natural and moral efficacy, we cannot doubt ut the Prayers of God's people for their Paſtors have alſo a superna- ral virtue to derive the bleſſing of God upon their labours, ſo as to nder their Miniſtry ſtill more effectual. The motive, which St. *Paul* ere makes uſe of to prevail with the *Corinthians* to *help* him *by* their *rayers*, is this, that their interceſſion might procure of God for him at *gift*, for which they would afterwards have reaſon to *give* God *thanks*. he ſpiritual intereſt of Chriſtians hath ſo cloſe a connexion with the gifts eſtow'd by God on the Miniſters of the Goſpel, that it is no ways re- ugnant with the juſtice and goodneſs of God to with-hold thoſe gifts, ll they are pray'd for by thoſe, who are ſo much intereſted in them; d it is very agreeable with his goodneſs then to beſtow them, when nportun'd by their earneſt Supplication and Prayer. He who feeds e hungry, and gives drink to the thirſty, he who *rains* down *bread rom heaven*, and draws water out of the ſtony rock, rather than is beloved ſhould periſh thro' famine or drought, will not ſuffer thoſe ouls who *hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs*, to be famiſh'd for want f ſpiritual food and refreſhment; thoſe *wells* which of themſelves *are ithout water*, he will by ſome ſecret way or other ſupply; either he defects of thoſe, whoſe Miniſtry ſuch devout perſons are plac'd un- er, ſhall be remedied; or their wants ſhall be abundantly compenſated y larger effuſions of God's holy Spirit.

From what has been ſaid under this laſt head, of the great advantages that accrue to the people of God from thoſe Prayers, which they make in behalf of their Paſtors, it appears, that whilſt we have been exhorting you to this duty, we have not ſo partially regarded the intereſt of the Clergy, as to neglect that of the Laity. The benefit which Miniſters might hope to receive from the Prayers of their people is very great, and ſuch as Miniſters cannot, without wrong to themſelves, but earneſtly ſollicit for; but the fruit of it doth alſo redound to the people, o that they cannot deny what is ask'd of them, without being highly njurious to themſelves. A favour thus uſeful to their Paſtors, thus advantageous to themſelves, thus ſubſervient to the glory of God, we may juſtly hope that all good Chriſtians for their Miniſters ſakes, for their own ſakes, for Chriſt's ſake will not overlook. And if the affections of the people be not wanting herein to their Guides, the Church has taken care hat they ſhould not want proper words, wherewith to expreſs theſe their kind affections. Beſides thoſe proper ſeaſons ſet apart for imploring by Faſting and Prayer God's grace and heavenly benediction on thoſe perſons, who are call'd to ſerve in the ſacred Miniſtry of his Church, and proper Collects ſuited to thoſe ſolemn occaſions, which ſeaſons, it were to be wiſh'd, were as religiouſly obſerv'd, as they are piouſly appointed, Supplications for God's Miniſters make a part of our conſtant morning and evening Service. As often as you pray in publick, ſo often has the Church taught you to pray, that "God would ſend down upon Biſhops "and Curates the healthful Spirit of his grace, and pour upon them the "continual dew of his bleſſing." As often as ye approach to the Lord's table, ſo often are ye inſtructed to beg "our heavenly Father to give "grace to all Biſhops and Curates, that they may both by their life and "doctrine ſet forth his true and lively Word, and rightly and duly adminiſter his holy Sacraments." We have nothing therefore farther to deſire, than that theſe requeſts may not only drop from your lips, but come from the very bottom of your hearts; that you would ſatisfie your own conſciences, that you do not utter theſe words in mere compliance with a receiv'd form, by making theſe ſame requeſts for us in ſecret, as well as in publick; in your cloſets, as well as in the Church; that when the Miniſter prays with a loud voice, that the Lord would be with you, ye would not barely anſwer him with your tongues, but with your ſouls, that the ſame Lord would be with his ſpirit.

THEN might we hope that your Prayers would help together with ours for us, and our Prayers help together with yours for you; that God would hear us, when we pray to him to ſave his people; and that he would hear you, when you pray that he would bleſs them, who are his peculiar inheritance; *that for the gifts beſtow'd upon us by means of* your interceſſion, and for the bleſſings diſpens'd to you thro' our Supplications, *thanks may be given* to God both *on our*, and your *behalf*; and that finally by theſe reciprocal offices of love, and intercourſe of 2 Cor. 1. 14. Prayers, we may promote each others ſalvation, ſo *that ye* may be *our rejoycing*, and *we* may be *yours, in the day of the Lord.*

SERMON VII.

Of ſtated Forms of Prayer.

LUKE XI. 1, 2.

And it came to paſs that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceaſed, one of his diſciples ſaid unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John alſo taught his diſciples. And he ſaid unto them, when ye pray, Say.——

AMONGST all thoſe manifold and great bleſſings, which divine Providence hath vouchſaf'd to this Church, and which have been deriv'd down to us from its happy Reformation from the errors and corruptions of the Church of *Rome*, I know of none more valuable, than that of an excellent Liturgy or Form of Prayers, free from all ſuperſtition, and exactly ſuited to promote the honour of God, and to miniſter to true and ſubſtantial devotion. This gift was purchas'd to us by the blood of the firſt Reformers, and we ought therefore to value it accordingly. Our zeal for it would indeed be too immoderate, if we ſhould think it lawful for us to defend it by the ſame methods, wherewith the adverſaries of it have ſometimes oppos'd it. God forbid, it ſhould ever be ſupported by thoſe arms of violence, by which it hath been impugned; or that we ſhould think the maintenance and eſtabliſhment of it worth purchaſing at ſuch a price, as the enemies of it have thought worth being laid down for its extirpation, to wit, the utter ruin of a flouriſhing Church and Kingdom. But what hath been with ſo much blind rage and fury attack'd, we may, I hope, without offence modeſtly defend in the ſpirit of charity and meekneſs. For the removal therefore of any ſcruples, which weak perſons may have entertain'd againſt the uſe of a preſcrib'd Form, and to confirm the friends of our Church in a rational eſteem of what they may perhaps at preſent with too much implicitneſs approve, I ſhall take occaſion, from the words of the text, in which a Form of Prayer was by the diſciples of Chriſt ask'd, and by him at their requeſt deliver'd to them, to enquire

I. Whether any ſtated Form of Prayer is agreeable to the Word of God.

II. Whether that Form, which is preſcrib'd to us by the Governours of this Church, and which is us'd by us in our publick worſhip, is conſonant to the ſame Word of God.

For in vain do we go about to vindicate our Form, if there be any argument, which proves all Forms to be for that very reaſon unlawful and repugnant to God's Word, merely becauſe they are ſet Forms; and on the other ſide, it will not avail us for our vindication to allege; that Forms of Prayer may be lawfully us'd; that all Forms, as ſuch, are not repugnant to the Word of God; that ſome are warrantable, or even expedient to be us'd, if that particular Form, which is by us us'd, hath any thing peculiar to it, which renders the uſe of it unlawful; if ours lies open to any objections, which, tho' they don't conclude againſt other Forms of Prayer, ſo as to prove them faulty, are yet of weight and force enough to convince ours of ſuch faults, as render the uſe of them by us unjuſtifiable.

Now, when we plead that ſtated Forms of Prayer are agreeable to the Word of God, it is not neceſſary, that we ſhould prove, either that we are in Scripture expreſsly commanded, whenever we pray in publick, to uſe a ſet Form; or that we are bound ſo to do by the example of Chriſt, or of his Apoſtles; or that we are under an indiſpenſable obligation, whenever we pray to God in the aſſembly of the Saints, to pray after a preſcrib'd Form. This is more than we are concern'd to prove, or to allege in our vindication; it is enough for us to ſhew, that ſtated Forms of Prayer are no where in Scripture forbidden, either in direct terms, or by fair conſequence; that we are not bound by any example of Chriſt, or of his Apoſtles, to forbear the uſe of ſuch Forms; and that no concluſive argument can be brought to prove them either unlawful, or unexpedient. For what the Scriptures do not plainly prohibit to be done, may be done agreeably with the Scriptures; what is by our Rulers judg'd expedient, that, if it be not antecedently to their commands in it ſelf unlawful, doth by virtue of their enjoyning it, and the authority which is by God given to them, become a duty. Thoſe therefore, who oppoſe or ſcruple the uſe of ſuch Forms, ought to produce ſome text, which expreſsly or conſequentially condemns the uſe of them. For if they only contend, that there is no precept in Scripture, which enjoyns the uſe of them, and that being not in Scripture commanded, they are for that only reaſon virtually forbidden; and if at the ſame time they do not prove, that we are any where in Scripture requir'd to uſe conceiv'd or unpremeditated Prayers, it will follow from theſe principles, that we muſt uſe no Prayers at all in the publick congregation: not premeditated ones, becauſe there is no text poſitively enjoyning them; not extemporary effuſions, becauſe neither is there any text, by which theſe are preſcrib'd.

But tho' it would ſuffice for our defence to inſiſt upon this plea, that Forms of Prayer are no where in Scripture forbidden; yet for the more effectual ſilencing of all cavils, we do farther urge, in maintenance of our cauſe, that the uſe of ſome Forms is in Scripture directly commanded. For, whether we conſult the writings of the Old Teſtament, or of the New, in both we ſhall find ſet Forms of Prayer preſcrib'd.

The preſcription of them in the Old Teſtament proves, that the uſe of them may be enjoyn'd in the Church of God; the preſcription of them in the New Teſtament proves, that the injunction of them is no unwarrantable impoſition upon the liberty of Chriſtians. In the 6th chapter of the book of *Numbers* at the 22d verſe you will find a poſitive and expreſs command for the uſe of a ſet Form of benediction: *And the Lord ſpake unto Moſes, ſaying, Speak unto Aaron, and unto his Sons, ſaying, On this wiſe ye ſhall bleſs the children of Iſrael, ſaying unto them, The Lord bleſs thee and keep thee: The Lord make his face to ſhine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.* What can be more plain, than that here is a Form preſcrib'd to the Prieſts, to be continually us'd in their bleſſing of the people? That this Form was by *Moſes* deliver'd to *Aaron*, and his Sons, and that *Moſes* receiv'd it from the mouth of God? Thoſe therefore, who oppoſe the uſe of all ſet Forms, as unſcriptural and unwarrantable, muſt excuſe us, if we have a greater regard to the wiſdom of *Moſes*, than to their opinions; or, to ſpeak more properly, if we have a greater deference to the authority of God preſcribing a ſet Form of Prayer, than to their judgment, who condemn all Forms, as inconſiſtent with a ſpirit of piety and true devotion. *The Lord bleſs thee, and keep thee*, ſaid the Prieſt; and certainly God was not leſs ready to vouchſafe his bleſſing and protection, becauſe the Miniſter of God always implor'd them in the ſame Form of words. The Saints of our age might perhaps ſlight a benediction formally pronounc'd, and always utter'd in the ſame words; but we ſee it was God's pleaſure, that as the bleſſing, which his people wanted, was always the ſame; ſo it ſhould always be implor'd of him, and convey'd to them, by the ſame ſignificant words.

AND as the Prieſts under the Law were requir'd to bleſs the People in a ſet Form; ſo alſo were the people enjoyn'd to offer up ſome, at leaſt, of their Prayers to God in ſuch words, as were not on a ſudden conceiv'd by them, but before-hand prepar'd for them. When a murder was committed, and the author of it was not known, God's pardon was to be ask'd by the Elders of the adjoyning city, in this Form: Deut. 21. 7,8. *Our hands have not ſhed this blood, neither have our eyes ſeen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Iſrael, whom thou haſt redeem'd, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Iſrael's charge. And the blood ſhall be forgiven them.* Here we find, that the guilt of murder was to be expiated by the uſe of a preſcrib'd Form, which yet in the opinion of ſome warm men is it ſelf a crime, which wants to be aton'd. At the removing, and reſting of the Ark, a Form was us'd not once, but conſtantly, as often as the ſame occaſion return'd. Num. 10. 35, 36. *When the Ark ſet forward*, then *Moſes ſaid, Riſe up, Lord, and let thine enemies be ſcatter'd; and let them that hate thee, flee before thee. And when it reſted, he ſaid, Return, O Lord, unto the many thouſands of Iſrael.* This very appointed Form we find us'd afterwards by *David*, at the Pſal. 68. 1. bringing of the Ark to the city of *David*, and by *Solomon*, at the dedi- 2 Chron. 6. 41. cation of the Temple. It is not more certain, that the *Pſalms* of *David* are part of the ſervice of our Church now, than that they were heretofore compos'd for the ſervice of the Temple. It is evident by the inſcriptions of them, that for this uſe they were by him at firſt fram'd; and it is evident from the ſacred Hiſtory, that to this uſe they were in the ſucceeding ages employ'd.

BUT it will be ſaid, that arguments brought from the Old Teſtament in behalf of ſet Forms, do ſavour of *Judaiſm*; that it will not follow, that becauſe the *Jews* were allow'd, or requir'd to uſe Forms, therefore Chriſtians may; that the Chriſtian liberty exempts us from many burdens, to which they, who liv'd under the *Moſaick* diſpenſation, were ſubject; and that appointed Forms may be numbred amongſt thoſe rigorous reſtraints, from which we are ſet free by the law of liberty, the Goſpel of Chriſt. We ſhall do well therefore to conſult the Goſpel, and enquire, whether Forms of Prayer have any countenance from thence. We profeſs our ſelves to be the diſciples of Chriſt, and we here in the text find a Form by him given to his diſciples. They made an humble requeſt to him, that they might by him their Maſter be as well furniſh'd for the duty of Prayer, as the followers of *John* were by their Maſter. And in compliance with this their pious ſuit, he ſaid unto them, *When ye pray, Say, Our Father,* &c. Either a Form of Prayer is here by Chriſt plainly enjoyn'd, or nothing is plain in holy Writ. In vain do the adverſaries of preſcrib'd Forms here oppoſe the authority of one *Evangeliſt* to that of the other: *After this manner pray ye,* ſaith our Saviour, as this hiſtory is related by St. *Matthew*: *He ſaid unto them, when ye pray, Say,* as the ſame is here related by St. *Luke*. The words of St. *Luke* are expreſs, and admit but of one interpretation: the words of St. *Matthew* are ambiguous, and capable of a two-fold conſtruction: it is therefore much more proper that thoſe, which are doubtful, ſhould be explain'd by thoſe which are determin'd, than that thoſe, which are in their ſenſe determin'd, ſhould be conſtrued by thoſe that are leſs certain. We can't obey our Saviour, ſpeaking as he doth here in St. *Luke*, unleſs we uſe the Form by him appointed; we do obey our Saviour, ſpeaking as he doth in St. *Matthew*, when we uſe that Form. He who bids us, *when we pray, to ſay, Our Father,* commands us to uſe thoſe very words; we do not therefore obſerve his command, except we uſe them: he who ſaith, *Pray ye thus, Our Father,* if he doth not bid us uſe thoſe very words, doth not forbid us; and therefore we do not diſobey him in the uſe of them. We might perhaps have come up to the extent of our Saviour's command, as it is expreſs'd by St. *Matthew*, if we had only propos'd to our ſelves the Prayer by him given, as a pattern; but we do not come up to the extent of this precept of our Lord, as it is expreſs'd by St. *Luke*, unleſs we uſe it as a Form. We have not here therefore barely a Directory, but a proper Form of Prayer; nor doth Chriſt only teach us what things we ought to aſk of God, but alſo in what words we ought to aſk them.

NOR is this only a temporary Form, proper for the Church of Chriſt to have us'd in its firſt infancy, which was to give way to a more perfect manner of praying, when it was grown up. They, who pretend that this command was given only for a time, ought to ſhew when it was repeal'd, as plainly as we ſhew that it was here enacted. For what Chriſt once enjoyn'd, unleſs it can be prov'd, either from the nature of the thing to have been intended to oblige only ſome perſons, in ſome ages of the Church, or to have been ſince abrogated by as good authority, as it was at firſt eſtabliſh'd, we cannot but look upon to be ſtill of force, and to be always obligatory. Nor is the uſe of this Form ſuperſeded by that
Joh. 15. 16. command of our Saviour, that *whatſoever we aſk*, we ſhould aſk *in his name*, of which yet we find no mention in this Prayer. For we aſk in Chriſt's name, whatſoever we hope to receive for Chriſt's ſake: tho'

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we do not in words name Chriſt in our Prayer; yet whilſt in our thoughts we truſt wholly in the merits and interceſſion of our Saviour for our Prayers being prevalent with God, we may ſafely depend upon the gracious promiſe of our Lord, that *what* we thus *ask the Father in his name, he will give* us. Nor is it any proof, that this Form was not us'd by the Apoſtles, and therefore need not be us'd by us, that we do not read in the Scripture, that they did uſe it. For no one will be ſo unreaſonable as to affirm, that no Prayers were us'd by the Apoſtles, but what the Scriptures inform us were us'd by them; ſince, tho' we often find in holy Writ, that the firſt believers were diligent in performing the duty of Prayer, both in publick, and in private; yet the ſame Scriptures do very rarely deliver to us the very words, in which they utter'd their Prayers. Where we have any Prayers recorded, we have reaſon to think, that they were offer'd up to God in a ſet Form. Thus we find the whole company of primitive Chriſtians, in conſort with the Apoſtles themſelves, *lifting up their voice to God with one accord*, and ſaying a Prayer, which is verbatim recorded *Acts* 4. v. 24. All there joyn, not only with their hearts, but with their voices; not only in the ſame thoughts, but the ſame words: and unleſs therefore we will ſay, that all were immediately inſpir'd to utter the ſame ſyllables, for which there is no ground in the hiſtory, or probability in reaſon, we muſt allow, that they pray'd by a Form compos'd before-hand.

WHAT hath been ſaid upon this head is ſufficient to ſhew, if not the neceſſity, yet at leaſt the lawfulneſs of praying by a Form. We do not challenge the ſame reverence to Forms of merely human compoſure, as was due to thoſe, that were dictated and appointed by God; we do not pretend to ſet the Prayers of the Church upon a level with that perfect Form, which was deliver'd to us by our Lord and Saviour. But ſince God was pleas'd to preſcribe Forms to be us'd in his publick worſhip in the *Jewiſh* Church, and ſince Chriſt taught his diſciples to pray after a Form, it will undeniably follow, that to uſe ſet Forms of Prayer is not repugnant to the will of God, is no ſtinting of the Spirit, no impediment to devotion, no inſtance of ſuperſtition, no part of forbidden *will-worſhip*, no invention of Antichriſt. That *all things ſhould be done to the glory of God,* we are agen and agen warn'd in Scripture; and we may ſafely leave it to the judgment of any pious and ſober perſon, whether the glory of God is beſt promoted by ſuch Prayers, in which ſtrict care is taken, that nothing ſhould be utter'd unbecoming the divine Majeſty; or by ſuch extemporary conceptions, in which we are ſure from experience, that many unſeemly, many irreverent, many blaſphemous ſpeeches have been often pour'd forth. That *all things ſhould be done for edification* is another Scripture precept; and whether thoſe Prayers, which are form'd by the mature advice of many perſons eminent for wiſdom and piety, and which are known to, and underſtood by the people; or thoſe, which are conceiv'd on a ſudden by one man, whoſe abilities perhaps are not very great, and which thoſe, who are to joyn with them, muſt firſt ſtudy to underſtand, before they can in their devotions concur therein, are moſt likely to edifie the Church, can with unprejudic'd perſons bear no diſpute. *If I know not the meaning of the voice,* ſaith the Apoſtle, *I ſhall be unto him that ſpeaketh, a barbarian; and he that ſpeaketh ſhall be a barbarian unto me.* Now the meaning of the voice may be as unknown to us, if a Prayer be made in a phraſe, as if it be made in a tongue, that is not underſtood; and he who prays 1 Cor. 14.11.

in an unintelligible manner, is as much a barbarian to thoſe who hear him, as if he pray'd in an unknown language: ſo that, unleſs all Miniſters were maſters of perſpicuity, which yet perhaps is a talent as rare as any, it would be in vain for the Church to have taken care, that publick Prayers ſhould be celebrated in a tongue that is underſtood by the people; ſince, 1 Cor. 14.16. notwithſtanding this care, *he that occupieth the room of the unlearned*, or indeed even he that is learned, might not always be able to *ſay Amen* to a Prayer, which he might not always be able to underſtand.

If earneſt deſires, if devout affections, if cloſe attention and fervour of ſpirit do recommend our Prayers to God; all theſe advantages may rather be hop'd for by thoſe, who uſing a prepar'd and known Form have nothing farther to do, than to excite in their minds paſſions ſuitable to the work they are employ'd about, than by ſuch, who depending wholly upon the conceptions of another, muſt firſt endeavour to catch thoſe words, which ſhall fall from him; then be employ'd in finding out their meaning; then conſider, whether what is ask'd, be lawful or expedient for them to ask; whether what is in their name confeſs'd, hath by them been really committed; whether they can heartily joyn in ſuch and ſuch a petition or thankſgiving, which, before they can have determin'd in their own thoughts, it may be too late for them to joyn in; becauſe their ſpokes-man is by this time paſs'd on perhaps to another matter. If therefore by compos'd Forms the infirmities of ſome men are beſt remedied; if our conſent and communion with other Chriſtians is hereby beſt teſtified; if errors and irregularities in worſhip be by this means beſt prevented; if they are moſt ſubſervient to edification, to true devotion, and to the glory of God; we may ſafely conclude, that a well-compos'd Form of publick worſhip in the Church is not only lawful, but expedient, and in ſome degree even neceſſary.

And as Forms in general are conſonant to the Word of God; ſo, I think, we may with modeſty affirm, that there is nothing in the Form preſcrib'd and us'd by our Church, diſſonant thereunto. All the Prayers of the Church are directed to a proper object, all are cloath'd in proper and ſignificant language, all diſpos'd in a proper and regular order. In the entrance upon this ſolemn duty the Miniſter of God doth both inſtruct the people in the right performance of it, and excite them to it: by apposite ſentences taken out of Holy Writ he ſhews the mercy of that God to whom we approach, and encourages us to implore it, and to expect it. We make an humble and devout Confeſſion of our ſins to God, that he, who is deaf to the Prayers of the impenitent, may be prevail'd upon to hear thoſe requeſts, which are offer'd to him by the ſincerely penitent. Abſolution is declar'd by God's Miniſter to all ſuch, who truly repent; and, if this condition be rightly perform'd, we may reſt ſecure, that the ſentence pronounc'd here upon earth, is by God ratified in heaven. We pray to God in thoſe words, which were taught us by the Son of God; and doubt not but to be heard for his ſake, in whoſe very words we lift up our ſouls to his and our Father. We pour forth Prayers and Praiſes unto God in words dictated by his Holy Spirit to his ſervant *David*; and if our affections go along with our tongues, we need not fear, but theſe Hymns will be pleaſing to that God, who was ſo much pleas'd with the firſt Framer of them. We read a portion of Scripture out of the Old, and another out of the New Teſtament; and in both we diſcover the marvellous things of the Goſpel: in one foretold, in the other exhibited; in one we acknowledge Chriſt

romis'd, in the other manifeſted to deſtroy the works of the Devil, and
 redeem loſt mankind. That *Scripture*, which was *given by the in-* 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.
piration of God, and which *is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for*
rrection, and *for inſtruction in righteouſneſs*, is audibly read in the
rs of all the people, *that the man of God may* by this method of in-
ruction *be* made *perfect, thoroughly furniſh'd unto all good works*. The
untains of ſalvation are open'd, that *every one that thirſteth*, may *come*
d replenish his ſoul with *the waters* of life. We celebrate the great
yſteries of Chriſt's coming into the world in thoſe very Hymns, in
hich it was at firſt publiſh'd by the Prophet *David*, of whoſe ſeed he
me; by the good old *Simeon*, who bare him in his arms; and by the
eſſed Virgin, who conceiv'd him in her womb. We daily recite the
rticles of that faith, by which we are partakers of the merits of Chriſt,
membring the doctrine of St. *Paul*, that *with the heart man believeth* Rom. 10. 10.
to righteouſneſs, and with the mouth confeſſion is made unto ſalva-
on. Each morning and evening we pray for the divine aſſiſtance againſt
 dangers, whether bodily, or ghoſtly, as knowing that thro' his pro-
ction alone we can be ſafe from *the peſtilence that walketh in dark-* Pſal 91. 6.
ſs, and from the deſtroyer, who lieth daily in wait for our perdition.
e commend the Governours in State, and in Church to the peculiar
re of God, in compliance with the commands of the Apoſtles, *that* 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2.
pplications, prayers, and *interceſſions be made for all men*; *for Kings,*
d for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peace-
ble life in all godlineſs and honeſty; and that we ſhould pray as for all
ints in general, ſo in a more eſpecial manner for the Miniſters of
e Goſpel, that the Word of the Lord may have its free courſe, and
at they may ſpeak the myſtery of Chriſt, as they ought to ſpeak. If
y of our brethren labour under any calamity, we with united Prayers
g of God a deliverance from it: if any have receiv'd a ſignal bleſſing,
e with one heart and voice return unto God our joynt thankſgivings
r it, as conſidering that we *are the* myſtical *body of Chriſt, and mem-* 1 Cor. 12. 27.
ers in particular; *and* that *whether one member ſuffer, all the mem-* v. 26.
ers ought to *ſuffer with it, or one member be honour'd, all the mem-*
ers ought to *rejoyce with it*. All thoſe ſeveral requeſts, which we have
ro' the whole Office ſeparately pour'd forth, we do in the cloſe ſumm
p in one, and offer up to him, who having promis'd, that when *two* Mat. 18. 20.
three are gather'd together in his name, he will grant what they ask,
ill faithfully on his part perform that gracious promiſe to thoſe, who
hus ask it, in ſuch a manner as he ſhall ſee moſt expedient for them.
e are at laſt diſmiſs'd with a ſolemn benediction pronounc'd by him,
hom God hath impower'd to bleſs his people in his name. As St.
aul's Epiſtles, ſo our Prayers are ſhut up with a ſupplication of the
reateſt mercies, which men can ask, or God beſtow.

As often as we approach to the Table of the Lord, there to celebrate
is Supper, we conſecrate that ſolemn Office by beginning it with that
rayer, which was taught us by the ſame mouth, that inſtituted that
oly Sacrament. We beg of God that purity of heart, which his holy
pirit only can inſpire, and without which it is to no purpoſe for us
o *encompaſs his Altar*. We hear the Commandments of God with
ur own ears, and are thereby as plainly inſtructed in his will, as if we
ad been actually preſent at the firſt delivery of them in mount *Sinai*.
eing conſcious of our paſt tranſgreſſions we humbly implore God's par-
on, and knowing our own weakneſs we earneſtly ſue for the aids of

his grace. We pray for God's militant Church, and thank him for his triumphant. The danger of communicating unworthily is repreſented to us in ſuch lively colours, as to deter the prophane from approaching to thoſe venerable myſteries; and the advantages of a worthy reception are in ſuch a manner diſplay'd, as to encourage all thoſe who are ſo prepar'd, as to "be meet partakers of thoſe holy Myſteries". There is no one diſpoſition of mind requiſite for the due celebration of that ſolemn ordinance, which the office then us'd is not fitted both to expreſs, and to excite. And we may ſafely venture to affirm, that whoever is endued with that profound humility, that hearty contrition, that lively faith, that perfect charity, that devout thankfulneſs, that ardent devotion, which the Prayers appointed by our Church, to be then and there offer'd up to God, do preſuppoſe in all who make uſe of them, cannot be an unworthy receiver of that holy Sacrament.

It would require too much time to go thro' all the other offices, and to ſhew how fitly the Prayers in each are adapted to thoſe occaſions, for which they are deſign'd. The more carefully we ſhall weigh and examine them, the more diſtinctly we ſhall enquire into each Prayer of the Church, and the parts of each; the more thoroughly we ſhall be convinc'd, that if they do not always miniſter to true devotion, it is becauſe we are wanting to our ſelves, not becauſe the Church hath been wanting in the proviſion, which ſhe hath made for us. We ſhould ſhew too fond a regard for any thing, which we confeſs to be human, if we ſhould pretend that it was abſolutely perfect; and we might perhaps deſerve the imputation, with which we have been unjuſtly charg'd, o idolizing the Common-Prayer, if we ſhould pretend, that there was no one thing in it capable of being improv'd for the better; that nothing could be added, diminiſh'd, chang'd therein, but what would rather depreſs, than advance its value. But I think it may without ſuperſtition and without bigotry be ſaid, that the pretended imperfections of it are as few and as ſmall, as thoſe of any other compoſure purely human; that ſuch things, as have by ſome been look'd upon as blemiſhes therein, have by others of as great piety and as ſound judgment been eſteem'd beauties; that an improvement of it would prove much more difficult in practice, than it may appear in theory; that what ſome men might think an amendment, others might look upon as a depravation; that if ſuch alterations only were to be made in it, as all men ſhould agree in, it would be like the laws of the *Medes* and *Perſians*, unalterable; and that thoſe, who have made the moſt exceptions againſt it, have deſir'd to ſubſtitute in its place, what, in the opinion of all but themſelves and their implicite followers, hath been ſtill more exceptionable. It ſuffices to juſtifie and recommend our uſe of it, that whatever its alleg'd defects are, it hath nothing in it ſinful, or unwarrantable; that the matter of the Prayers therein preſcrib'd is according to God's will; and that the Form of them is grave, decent, and expreſſive; that we ask them in ſuch things, as God hath commanded us to ask, and promis'd to grant; and that the language, in which we ask the divine bleſſings, is neither too lofty, ſo as to be above the apprehenſion of the meaneſt, nor too low, ſo as too create contempt in thoſe of better capacities; that the end of our meeting together in the houſe of Prayer being to worſhip the ſame God, to beg the ſame bleſſings, to vow the ſame duties, to praiſe God for the ſame mercies, the Prayers of our Church are very well adapted to this purpoſe, as anſwering all the general wants and occaſions of the people of God.

I HAVE neither time, nor inclination, nor, I hope, any need to exa-
mine thoſe ſeveral exceptions, which have been made againſt our Li-
urgy, either in whole, or in part. They have been frequently, and I
hink fully anſwer'd by thoſe Divines, who have wrote in its defence.
Many of them are ſuch, as would offer themſelves to the thoughts of
ery few; ſo that to propoſe them, in order to ſolve them, would be
ut to ſuggeſt doubts to thoſe, who of themſelves have none. Were
l that ever yet have been made, anſwer'd to the full ſatisfaction of thoſe
ho made them; others as weighty, or, to ſpeak more properly, as
ight as they might be ſtarted by perſons either of as weak brains, or
f as perverſe ſpirits as thoſe, who thro' great ignorance, or greater ma-
ce advanc'd the former. At this time, and in this place I think it
ill tend more to edification, to give ſome plain and wholſome advice
o thoſe, who have no objections againſt our Liturgy, how to make
e uſe of it moſt beneficial to the good of their ſouls. I would there-
re moſt earneſtly beſeech all ſuch, that being in their conſciences fully
erſwaded of the lawfulneſs, and of the excellency of the Prayers of our
hurch, they would take all proper opportunities of joyning in them;
at they would not deprive themſelves of the ſpiritual advantages they
ay reap therefrom, by a voluntary, unneceſſary, and frequent abſence;
at ſince there is no one part of them which doth not miniſter to piety,
ey would take care to partake in the whole, that they may not by a
rdy and unſeaſonable coming to the *Houſe of Prayer* both maim their
wn religious worſhip, and diſturb the devotion of others; that, whilſt
ey are *in the Courts of the Lord's Houſe,* they would behave them-
lves there, as in the more immediate preſence of God, with ſobriety,
cency, humility, and reverence; that they would be preſent not only
body, but in ſoul, and that whilſt they *draw near unto God with*
their lips, their hearts in the mean time be not *far from him;* that
hey would leave behind them all ſecular thoughts and cares, and at-
end to the duty of the place without wandring and diſtraction; that
hey would not think it then a proper time to be exact in exchanging
ll the offices of courteſy, reſpect, and civility one to another, when
ey are, or ought to be employ'd in the immediate worſhip and adora-
on of God; that, when they joyn in the publick Confeſſion of the Church,
hey would then with all ſorrow and contrition think of their own ma-
ifold ſins both of omiſſion, and commiſſion, which tho' not proper to
e pronounc'd openly, yet are at that time a very proper object of their
wn private meditations; that, when the Abſolution is by the Miniſter
ronounc'd, they would not, as I find the manner of ſome is, go along
with him in repeating vocally, what it is his peculiar function to declare,
ut would take care devoutly to apply it to their own particular com-
ort; that in the Lord's Prayer, and in other Prayers, in which they
re by the Church requir'd to joyn, they would accordingly joyn, not
nly with one heart, but alſo with one voice; that this vocal joyning
n the Prayers of the Church being a privilege, either peculiar to the
eople of this Church, or no where ſo liberally indulg'd as to them,
hey would not loſe it by diſuſe; that in thoſe other Prayers, which
re to be utter'd by the Miniſter alone, they would, as they ought, go
long with him attentively in their thoughts, and make the requeſts
by him offer'd their own, by an Amen not formally dropping from their
ips, but ſeriouſly iſſuing from their very heart; that, when the Mini-
ſter calls upon them in that ſhort, but uſeful exhortation, Let us pray,

they would not look upon theſe as empty and inſignificant words, but would be thereby rous'd up effectually to a more cloſe application of their minds, and to a greater warmth and fervour in their devotions; that, when they hear *the Word of God* read, they would receive it as *the Word of God*, with all awe and reverence, and be careful to treaſure it up for the regulation of their lives; that as often as the Commandments are repeated, they would think of their own tranſgreſſions of them, either according to the letter, or according to their true meaning, ſo that they may be the more ſenſible of the great need they have of God's mercy for the forgiveneſs of what is paſt, and of his grace for the better performance of his will for the time to come; that, when they prepare themſelves for the Holy Sacrament, they would beforehand carefully read over the office of Communion, that ſo they may ſtir up in themſelves all thoſe graces, which the Church ſuppoſes in all her Communicants, and which whoſoever is deſtitute of, cannot ſincerely and from the heart joyn in that holy ſervice; in ſhort, that they would bring with them to *the Houſe of God* ſuch affections, as becometh his Saints; and then they need not doubt but they will find ſuch Prayers to expreſs theſe affections in, as will prove a *reaſonable ſervice, holy and acceptable unto God.* Rom. 12. 1.

SERMON VIII.

Of religious Rites and Ceremonies.

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1 Cor. XIV. 40.

Let all things be done decently, and in order.

The firſt Sermon on this Text.

THERE are very many and very ſtrong reaſons, why we ſhould reverence the memory of the firſt Reformers of our Church; why we ſhould ſpeak of them with veneration; and why we ſhould thank God for thoſe wonderful things, which he wrought by them for the good of his Church, and for the honour of his holy Name: but there is no one hing for which they are more deſervedly to be reverenc'd, becauſe here is no one thing which more manifeſts their great prudence, their ound judgment, and their extraordinary moderation, than this; that n the reforming of thoſe abuſes that had crept into the Church, they eligiouſly obſerv'd that golden mean, which is nicely and ſcrupulouſly o be obſerv'd in all matters, that are of weight and moment; which t is very difficult for thoſe, who do aim at it, always to compaſs; which none but very wiſe men do ſo much as aim at; but which, when carefully aim'd at, and happily compaſs'd, is ſure to be approv'd and admir'd by all judicious obſervers.

THIS nice regard of our bleſſed Reformers to keep the middle way between extremes, which are too eaſily run into, and which are always ttended with ill conſequences, was the reaſon, that when they propos'd o correct thoſe errors which had over-run the Chriſtian Church, they did not raſhly and peremptorily reſolve to change every thing, which hey found eſtabliſh'd and receiv'd in the age wherein they liv'd; but weighing all things with the utmoſt calmneſs, the moſt exact temper, nd moſt mature deliberation; what, after the beſt judgment they could form, they perceiv'd to be erroneous either in faith, worſhip, or diſcipline, that they reſtor'd to its primitive purity; what was ſound, unblameable, and incorrupt, that they themſelves inviolably kept, and with great faithfulneſs deliver'd down to their poſterity. Hence it was,

T that

that when they ſhook off the intolerable yoke of *Papacy*, a burden under which their fore-fathers had long groan'd, and which, being both in it ſelf uſurp'd and injurious, and alſo in the exerciſe of it very fatal to the intereſts of Chriſt's pure and holy Religion, they were ſo far from being bound any longer to bear, that they were in conſcience oblig'd to caſt it off; they ſtill retain'd the primitive, the apoſtolical, I may add, the divine inſtitution of Epiſcopacy. Hence alſo was it, that when they threw out thoſe prayers, and other parts of worſhip, which had any thing in them favouring Superſtition, or Idolatry; yet they retain'd the uſe of publick Liturgies, and ſet Forms of prayer, as moſt conducing to the honour of God, to *the beauty of holineſs*, and to the edification of men's ſouls. Hence laſtly it was, that when they utterly aboliſh'd ſuch Rites and Ceremonies, as were either in the uſe of them unlawful, or for their exceſſive number over-burdenſome, or for their inſignificancy trifling; they ſtill reſerv'd ſuch as were in their nature free from all blame, and in their kind fitted and adapted for the ornament of God's publick worſhip, and for the advancement and furtherance of external Religion; which two words, in the ſenſe fix'd upon them by all ſober Chriſtians, they did not think God had put aſunder, or that they might not joyn together.

THIS moderation of our firſt Reformers gave a great and incurable wound to *Papacy*, and for that reaſon made our Church more formidable to the Church of *Rome*, than any other that ſeparated from it. For thoſe arguments from antiquity, with which they endeavour to preſs others with ſome appearance of advantage, have no weight or force againſt ours. We are able to prove to all unprejudic'd perſons, that where-ever we differ from thoſe of the *Romiſh* Communion, they, and not we, have been the innovators: we can plainly ſhew, that in whatever point we have departed from them, they had firſt departed from thoſe more early Chriſtians who went before them: that we have made no change in Religion purely for the ſake of change; but where they had before unwarrantably alter'd it for the worſe, there we have upon juſt grounds reduc'd it to its primitive purity and integrity. The conſent between us and the firſt Fathers of the Church; the exact agreement of the Religion which we now profeſs, with that which our Saviour and his Apoſtles taught; and which thoſe, who liv'd in the ſame age with them, or in the neareſt ages to them, declare that they receiv'd from the Apoſtles, hath been often irrefragably prov'd by the learned Writers of our Communion. An appeal hath been made by them to the teſtimony of the ancients; and upon examination it hath appear'd, that thoſe, who have been brought to vouch for *Popery*, have been falſe, ſuborn'd witneſſes; that ſpurious writings have been aſcrib'd to authors, who were gone out of the world long before ſuch ſuppoſititious books came into it; that thoſe pretended ancients, who have been cited in favour of the doctrines now taught in the Church of *Rome*, are not ſo ancient as pretended; that according to the ſuffrage of confeſſedly genuine and unqueſtionable witneſſes, our Religion is truly ancient, primitive, catholick, and apoſtolical.

THE *Romaniſts* therefore finding no advantage to their cauſe, but inſtead of that, manifeſt diſadvantage, from their appeals to Scripture, and to antiquity, have made uſe of other artifices to deſtroy our holy Religion. When they ſpeak in their own names, and appear in their own ſhapes, they accuſe us of ſchiſm, and thunder out anathemas againſt us

dividing from their Communion; but when they would prejudice
hers againſt us, and in order to that, diſguiſe themſelves in borrow'd
lours, they then accuſe us of ſymbolizing too much with the Church
Rome. For it is undoubted matter of fact, which hath been publick-
and ſolemnly atteſted in the moſt authentick manner, that thoſe ob-
ctions, which have been made againſt the Diſcipline, Liturgy, and Rites
our Church, by ſuch as have ſeparated from us, were firſt fram'd and
t into their mouths by *Popiſh* Emiſſaries; that thoſe weapons, with
ich we have been attack'd by our miſtaken brethren, were forg'd
d ſharpned in the ſhops of the *Philiſtines*; and that thoſe, who have
n thought by others, and have perhaps thought themſelves, the moſt
rm and zealous advocates againſt *Popery*, have all the while been
ading its cauſe, executing its ſecret orders, and promoting its in-
eſt.

I WOULD not be thought to inſinuate, that all who have ſeparated,
d ſtill do ſeparate from us have been, or are, under the direction of
e Church of *Rome*; but it cannot be denied, that our unhappy di-
ions were in the firſt riſe of them contriv'd, and have ever ſince been
duſtriouſly fomented by the great managers of the catholick cauſe.
hen the advocates for *Popery* have appear'd in open field againſt us,
have engag'd them with ſucceſs, and having had as expert champions,
any they have, and a much better cauſe than they have, we have ne-
r fail'd to get the victory. But, when they chuſe rather ſecretly to
dermine us, than openly to attack us; when they hang out falſe co-
urs, and fight under the banners of thoſe, whom we are very unwill-
to look upon, or to treat as adverſaries, we then labour under great
advantages; we ſcarce dare defend our ſelves, for fear of offending
oſe, whom we had rather eſteem brethren, than adverſaries. And
o' we certainly know, that the objections, which are made againſt our
urch, were firſt fram'd by thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, that the ſe-
rations of our brethren from it are by them carried on, and that their
tereſt is thereby propagated; yet we are ſomewhat loath to ſhew the
eakneſs of ſuch objections, the miſchief of ſuch diviſions, and their
ndency to promote the intereſt of the Church of *Rome*; leſt whilſt we
us wage a defenſive war againſt the common enemy, we be thought
carry on an offenſive war againſt our fellow-Proteſtants.

IT is matter of melancholy conſideration, that any well-meaning and
ious perſons ſhould unwillingly, and unwittingly, be inſtrumental in
romoting the intereſts of a Religion, which they do from their hearts
bhor and deteſt. But thoſe who are in their conſciences convinc'd,
hat the diviſions from our Church do in the nature of the thing, tho'
ot in the intention of thoſe who ſeparate, tend to the overthrow of the
eform'd Religion, and to the re-eſtabliſhment of *Popery*, cannot excuſe
hemſelves to their own conſciences if they do not, and cannot therefore
ut be excus'd by all equal judges if they do, what is in their power to pre-
ent or heal ſuch diviſions; if they endeavour with the ſpirit of meek-
eſs to reduce thoſe who are gone aſtray; or if this be too much to be
op'd for, conſidering their inveterate prejudices, they do at leaſt take
ome occaſions now and then to eſtabliſh thoſe of their own Commu-
ion in a firm and ſtrict adherence to it, by ſhewing them the reaſons
nd grounds of thoſe uſages which are found fault with; and the weak-
eſs of thoſe arguments which are brought to prove the unlawfulneſs
f ſuch uſages, and the neceſſity of ſeparating from a Church, where

ſuch pretended unlawful uſages are practis'd, maintain'd, and impos'd. With this view I ſhall at preſent beg leave to offer to your thoughts a ſhort and modeſt defence of thoſe Rites and Ceremonies, which are enjoyn'd by our Church, and with which thoſe who diſſent from us, declare themſelves to be offended; which I ſhall do in ſuch a manner as is more ſuitable to an apology for our own practice, than to an invective againſt thoſe who differ from us.

Now in order to remove any doubts that may be entertain'd concerning the lawfulneſs of our Ceremonies, it will be proper to enquire

I. Whether any Church can of right oblige its ſubjects to the uſe of any Rites and Ceremonies; and

II. Whether our Church in particular hath a right to oblige her ſubjects to the practice of thoſe, which ſhe hath eſpecially enjoin'd.

For it will be to no purpoſe for us to defend our Ceremonies as innocent and lawful, if there be any blemiſh which belongs to all Rites, and makes all criminal and unlawful; and on the other ſide, it will be to no purpoſe to prove that ſome Rites may lawfully be enjoyn'd, and being enjoyn'd may be innocently complied with, if our particular Rites have in them ſome eſpecial fault from which others are free; ſo that tho' other Rites might be innocent, yet theſe particular ones are unjustifiable, unlawful, and intolerable.

Now in order to ſhew that the Church hath a power to preſcribe Rites and Ceremonies, and to require of its ſubjects a dutiful compliance with them; and that the Governours of the Church may in ſome caſes add new Laws to thoſe of Chriſt, without diveſting him of his empire in his own kingdom, or ſetting the obedience of his ſubjects looſe from himſelf; it is to be obſerv'd, that there are ſome things which *belong* to the eſſence of divine worſhip, ſome which are accidental to *it:* the former are ſo neceſſary, that without them our worſhip cannot be intire; the latter, where they are us'd, ſerve for an ornament to it, but it might barely ſubſiſt without them: the former being preſcrib'd by God, and reveal'd in Holy Writ, are perpetual and unchangeable; the latter depending upon the pleaſure of men may be different, according to the variety of different times and places. Concerning the former we, and thoſe who ſeparate from us, are agreed; concerning the latter, there is between us ſome difference in our practice, becauſe there is a difference in opinion. They profeſs to admit nothing in the worſhip of God, which God himſelf hath not preſcrib'd: we own, that nothing which God hath commanded, may be omitted; but we think that ſomething which God hath not commanded, may be us'd. For whatever is to be obſerv'd by us, whatſoever we do at our own choice, or by the direction of others, we think to be either neceſſary, unlawful, or indifferent. What any Law, to the obſervance of which we are bound, requires to be done, that we judge neceſſary; ſo that we cannot omit it without tranſgreſſion of our bounden duty: what any law, obliging us, forbids to be done, that we judge unlawful; ſo that we cannot do it without ſin: what no law, which we are bound by, either commands or forbids, that we judge indifferent; ſo that we may either do it, or leave it undone, without incurring any guilt. When therefore it is pretended that an action is neceſſary, he who pleads for its neceſſity, muſt ſhew ſome law, which

com-

ommands it; when it is urg'd that an action is ſinful, he who accuſes it of
n, muſt ſhew ſome law which prohibits it; but when the queſtion is,
hether an action be indifferent, or not, we muſt judge of this indiffe-
ence not by the declaration of the law, but by its ſilence. For we are
ught by the Apoſtle, that *where no law is, there* can be *no tranſ-* Rom. 4. 15.
reſſion: there is no law that forbids what is indifferent, it being the ve-
notion of indifferent neither to be requir'd or forbid; it may there-
re be practis'd without danger of ſinning. It is not therefore reaſon-
le to require of thoſe, who defend the uſe of ſome religious Rites and
eremonies, to produce ſome expreſs Text of Scripture, which enjoyns
ch Ceremonies; but it belongs to thoſe, who condemn the uſe of them,
ſhew us ſome direct precept, which forbids them. For what the
riptures do not prohibit to be done, that may be done agreeably with
e direction of the Scriptures; what the Governours of the Church re-
uire to be done, that, if by the rules of Scripture it may be done,
uſt be done; if it be not forbidden, it is requir'd by virtue of thoſe
neral precepts, which require our obedience to our lawful Governours
mmanding lawful things.

Who that God is, whom alone we are to worſhip; with what af-
ctions of mind we ought to worſhip him; with what devotion of ſoul,
d humiliation of body we are to perform our worſhip to him, we are
rfectly inſtructed by the Scriptures: but concerning the circumſtances
worſhip, in what place we ſhall meet together to worſhip him; at
hat times we ſhall aſſemble at ſuch place; what particular geſture of
dy we ſhall uſe; what habit, he who officiates, ſhall wear in the
blick worſhip, the Scriptures no where teach. Either therefore we
ay lawfully do ſomething, which the Scriptures do not expreſly com-
and, or it is not lawful for us to worſhip God at any fixt time, or
ſay our Prayers together in any appointed place; becauſe the Scrip-
ures have no where determin'd the hour of the day, when we ſhould
eet to worſhip God, or the preciſe place, where we ſhould pray unto
im. Thoſe who differ from us, do ſo far yield to the force of this
rgument, as to acknowledge, that thoſe circumſtances, without which
e worſhip of God cannot be adminiſtred, are to be left to the deter-
ination of our Governours, and that therefore they have an authority
appoint the time when, and the place where Chriſtians ought to aſ-
mble together for publick worſhip; but they ſeem not to be conſiſtent
ith themſelves, when they will not allow any power to the Church to
etermine any thing concerning the geſture or habit of thoſe, who at-
end or miniſter at the publick worſhip. For the Scriptures have no
ore given rules in the one caſe, than in the other; they have no more
bridg'd the authority of Governours in one caſe than in the other: ſo
hat if nothing be lawful in the worſhip of God, but what the Scriptures
ave preſcrib'd; if that liberty, which is left us by the Scriptures, may
ot be reſtrain'd by the Governours of the Church; if it be an invaſion
the kingdom of Chriſt, and an uſurpation upon our Chriſtian liber-
to be tied up, where Chriſt hath left us free; our Chriſtian liberty
as much invaded by that injunction, which requires that we ſhould
y our prayers rather at nine a clock in the Church, than at one a clock
the market-place, as it is by that eccleſiaſtical precept, which requires
he Miniſter to be cloath'd in a white garment, rather than in a black
ne, or the Receiver of the Sacrament to receive it kneeling, and not ſit-
ing, or ſtanding.

THE Apoſtles by the inſpiration of God's holy Spirit have given us ſome general rules concerning the worſhip of God: That *all things* ſhould 1 Cor. 14. 26. *be done decently, and in order*; that *all things be done to edifying*, we are taught by the inſpir'd Writers; but what is decent, what is orderly, what tends to edification, they have left to the determination of thoſe, who ſucceed them in the care and government of the Church. For thoſe things which are in their own nature variable and uncertain, are not proper to be fix'd by one invariable rule; what is decent in one place, and in one age, may, thro' the diverſity of opinions and cuſtoms, be indecent in another place, and in another age. The Apoſtle St. *Paul* thought it *comely* for men to be *uncover'd*, for women to be *cover'd* at the celebra- 1 Cor. 11. 4, &c. tion of divine worſhip: the mode of their *praying or propheſying* was very different, but in both caſes regard was had to decency. Since therefore ſo great regard is to be had to Decorum in publick worſhip; ſince that depends upon the manners and ſentiments of men; ſince thoſe manners and ſentiments are different amongſt different people, and not at all times the ſame amongſt people of the ſame country; ſince private Chriſtians may differ in their opinions of decency, and ſuch differences are no ways to be remov'd, but by the publick judgment of thoſe who have authority in the Church; we ought not to expect from the Scriptures fix'd and determin'd rules concerning ſuch particularities as theſe; but are to obey the Hebr. 13. 17. Scriptures, which require us in ſuch indifferent things to *ſubmit our-ſelves* to thoſe who *rule over* us, and *watch for* our *ſouls, as they that muſt give* an *account* of the expedience of their commands, we being anſwerable only for the lawfulneſs of them.

THERE will be no room for obedience to authority, there can be no place left for our obſerving thoſe precepts concerning ſubjection to our Governours, which are ſo often repeated, ſo plainly expreſt, and ſo warmly inculcated throughout the Scriptures, if we will not allow the Governours to interpoſe their authority in ſuch things, as in themſelves are confeſs'd to be indifferent. What the Scriptures command, that we are oblig'd to, tho' our Governours ſhould not require it, or tho' they ſhould forbid it: what the Scriptures prohibit, that, tho' the Church ſhould Acts 5. 29. exact it, we may not do; becauſe we are *to obey God rather than men.* Either therefore the Governours of the Church have authority in preſcribing indifferent Rites and Ceremonies, or they have no authority at all. That they have no original, abſolute, deſpotick authority over the conſciences of men, is readily acknowledg'd; but that they have a deriv'd, delegated, limited authority in ſuch things, as God hath left undetermin'd by any rules of Scripture, ſo that their deciſions, when no ways repugnant to God's Word, ought to be obey'd by all their ſubjects, is plain from all thoſe Scriptures, which require ſubjection to higher powers. Primarily and of it ſelf the Law of God only obliges our conſciences, becauſe God only hath a direct power over the conſcience; but eccleſiaſtical laws do alſo oblige us indirectly, by force of the law of God. God, by appointing Governours in the Church, hath directed us to whom we ought to pay our obedience; Governours, by appointing what Rites and Ceremonies ſhall be obſerv'd in the Church, do direct us in the particular inſtance of our obedience: when therefore in ſuch caſes we obey the commands of our Governours, we do not ſo properly obey them, as God. Either therefore we muſt expunge out of holy Writ all thoſe paſſages, which make obedience to Governours a part of our Chriſtian duty; or we muſt ſubmit to their commands in the obſervance of ſuch

ſages, which God hath no where forbid; and which they, by that autho-
ity wherewith God hath inveſted them, do think it proper to enjoyn.

For paying ſuch obedience we have the examples of Chriſt and his
Apoſtles to warrant us, who obſerv'd many Rites in the *Jewiſh* Church,
hich were not preſcrib'd by the law of God: We have the examples
f all Chriſtians in all ages; there never having been any church, which
ath not obſerv'd ſome Rites in the worſhip of God, which God himſelf
o where requir'd: We have the examples of thoſe who diſſent from
s, who obſerve many things in the worſhip of God, which they cannot
rove to be commanded by the expreſs letter of holy Writ. Since there-
re the Scriptures are ſilent concerning the particular modes of divine
orſhip; ſince what is in the Scriptures neither commanded nor forbid,
ſo far indifferent; ſince laws made by lawful authority, and no ways
erogatory to the laws of God, do lay an obligation upon the conſcience
f men; ſince thoſe laws of our Governours, which require obſervances
o where forbidden by the law of God, are no ways derogatory to God's
ws; ſince obedience to our Governours in ſome things is a duty; and
nce there is no room for the diſcharge of ſuch duty, but in our obſer-
ance of their commands in things indifferent antecedently to ſuch com-
nands; ſince we are by the Apoſtle requir'd to do *all things decently,*
nd in order, and can no ways attain at ſuch decency and order, but by
eaving the determination of what is decent and orderly to thoſe who
re in authority; ſince we have the examples of all Churches, and all
ges, and of the Apoſtles, and of Chriſt himſelf to warrant us in the
bſervance of Rites not preſcrib'd by the law of God; I think we may
enture to conclude, that the Governours of the Church have authority
o preſcribe innocent Rites and Ceremonies in the publick worſhip of
od; and that if the uſage of ſuch Rites cannot be prov'd from Reaſon
r from Scripture to be unlawful, they not only lawfully may, but of
neceſſity muſt be comply'd with by ſuch, who would approve them-
elves good, humble, and conſcientious Chriſtians.

WHAT hath been ſaid thus briefly concerning the authority of Go-
ernours to preſcribe, and the duty of ſubjects to comply with Rites
nd Ceremonies not forbidden by the law of God, will be applicable to
he particular Rites enjoyn'd and obſerv'd by our Church, as far as they
re allow'd to be no ways contrary to any divine law. But becauſe thoſe
who allow ſome Rites to be lawful, may entertain ſome doubts con-
erning the uſe of ours, as apprehending them to have ſome particular
aults, which do not belong to all Ceremonies in general, I ſhall pro-
eed to clear thoſe, which we of this Church are requir'd to obſerve,
rom ſuch objections as are brought to prove them unlawful and un-
warrantable. Thoſe who ſcruple the uſe of them, allege it as one main
ground of their ſcruples, that thoſe Ceremonies, which are us'd in our
hurch, are alſo us'd in the Church of *Rome*; and they are therefore
autious of obſerving them, leſt they ſhould thereby countenance the
rrors and corruptions of that Church. Now this would be a good ar-
gument againſt the uſage of ſuch Rites, if it could be prov'd, that thoſe
who err in ſome things, do certainly err in every thing; or, that we
ought to ſhew our abhorrence of the corruptions of a Church, by con-
demning and aboliſhing even thoſe uſages, which have nothing in them
but what is innocent and incorrupt. But we have not declar'd war
againſt thoſe of that Church as they are Chriſtians, but as they are Per-
verters of the Goſpel of Chriſt; we don't profeſs to differ from them in

every thing, but only in ſuch things, wherein we apprehend them to have degenerated from the pure and undefil'd Church of Chriſt. We think that we ſhould not be able to vindicate our ſelves from the charge of ſchiſm, which they bring againſt us, if whatever doctrine they held, whatever Rite they practis'd, that we ſhould for no other reaſon, but becauſe they held and practis'd it, forthwith condemn and reject.

THE ableſt champions for the cauſe of the Reformation have always thought it the beſt anſwer againſt the charge of ſchiſm, to allege and prove, that we have no further departed from them, than they departed from the pure and primitive Church of Chriſt. What is contrary to the purity of the Goſpel, that we reject; not becauſe *Popiſh*, but becauſe repugnant to the laws and doctrine of Chriſt: what is no ways contradictory to the ſimplicity of the Goſpel, what may be ſubſervient to piety, that we retain; not becauſe practis'd by the Church of *Rome*, but becauſe agreeable to the rules of the Goſpel. If there be any thing in our Ceremonies that is ſinful, they ought preſently to be aboliſh'd, tho' there was nothing of the ſame kind practis'd by thoſe of the *Roman* Communion; what is decent, and laudable in them cannot loſe its worth and value, becauſe others have them in common with us. If it be laid down as a good rule of Reformation, that we muſt depart as far as poſſible from *Rome*, we muſt renounce the articles of our Creed, becauſe they of that Church profeſs to believe them; we muſt declare our ſelves *Socinians*, that we may be thought ſtanch *Proteſtants*, and we muſt renounce the doctrine of the Trinity, becauſe it is held by thoſe, who do alſo hold that of Tranſubſtantiation. In the *Romiſh* Religion there are ſome things evil, ſome things good, ſome things wholly indifferent. Whatever is ſinful in that Communion, we are bound to reject, and have, we think, accordingly rejected; what is good, we ought to retain, and therefore do retain; what was indifferent, it was at the diſcretion of our Reformers either to keep or change, as they thought ſhould be more expedient. Private perſons may according to the variety of their judgments think ſome things might have been kept, which were left off, or ſome things might have been dropt, which are ſtill kept; but unleſs they can prove thoſe that have been aboliſh'd to be neceſſary, or thoſe that are reſerv'd to be unlawful, they are bound quietly to ſubmit to the abolition of the former, and to the uſage of the latter.

BUT if our Ceremonies are not in themſelves directly ſinful, yet may not ſcrupulous perſons have juſt reaſon to forbear the obſervance of them, becauſe ſuch uſe of them might give ſcandal to their weak brethren? Tho' they themſelves in their own conſciences are fully perſwaded of their innocence, yet ought they not to abſtain from what is in their opinion lawful, becauſe it is in the opinion of others unlawful? Now, were they indeed perfectly at liberty; were they entirely maſters of their own actions; were they not ſubject to the lawful commands of their Superiours; they might think it an abuſe of their liberty to do any thing, which might give ſcandal to any. But ſince there is greater ſcandal in neglecting what is commanded, than in obſerving it; ſince as many, and as conſcientious perſons are like to be ſcandaliz'd by the omiſſion, as by the uſage of ſuch preſcrib'd Rites; ſince in one caſe the ſcandal is not given, but taken; in the other caſe it is both given, and taken; ſince we may not omit our bounden duty for fear of offending others, but are in ſuch a manner to practiſe it, as may give the leaſt offence; ſince our omiſſion of what we judge to be lawful may tempt others to judge it unlawful, and by that

eans contribute to their entertaining injurious opinions of that autho-
y which impoſes it, the fear of giving ſcandal is ſo far from being a
od ground for our non-compliance, that it is a very ſtrong argument
our compliance. What in its own nature hath a proper tendency to
ake others ſin, that is truly ſcandalous; but that, from which ſuch as
very fooliſh, or very wicked may poſſibly take an occaſion to ſin,
not liable to any ſuch imputation. One perſon may be ſcandaliz'd
h my receiving the Sacrament kneeling, another may with as good
ſon be ſcandaliz'd with my receiving it ſitting, or ſtanding: we muſt
t therefore forbear to receive it in any poſture, becauſe in whatever
ſture we receive it, ſome may chance to be ſcandaliz'd; becauſe this
uld be to omit a neceſſary duty, and thereby to be guilty of ſin our
ves, in order to prevent all poſſibility of an imaginary ſin in others.

But we are told, that ſince we look upon theſe Rites to be indiffe-
nt, and thoſe who diſſent from us judge them unlawful, they there-
re ought not to be enjoyn'd; the Governours of the Church by abo-
hing of them might eaſe others without any injury to themſelves:
ſince they are acknowledg'd not to be eſſential to God's worſhip,
ey might on the one ſide be omitted without ſin, tho' by the other
e they cannot be practis'd with a good conſcience. This is a conſi-
ration, which doth not concern private men, but the publick Go-
rnours of the Church; and we are not now enquiring, what is the
ty of Magiſtrates in making laws, and by what rules they ought to
oceed in preſcribing Ceremonies; but what is the duty of ſubjects in
gard to laws already made, and by what meaſures they ought to go-
n themſelves in the obedience of their lawful Superiours. But thus
uch may be ſaid in defence of ſuch impos'd Rites, that tho' the wor-
ip of God may be perform'd without ſuch a particular Rite, yet it
annot be ſtript of all Ceremonies; that ſince there are no Ceremonies,
hich ſome perſons may not find fault with; ſince the abrogation of
hoſe which are preſcrib'd, may as juſtly offend ſome, as the impoſi-
ion of them offends others, it muſt neceſſarily be left to the prudence
thoſe, who have authority in the Church, to continue or relax the
poſing of them, according as they in their judgment, which is as
kely to be right and ſound judgment, as that of private men, ſhall think
be moſt for the edification of the Church of Chriſt. If they out of
ride, out of a deſire to Lord it over men's conſciences, and an undue affe-
tation of Church-tyranny, or out of any other undue motive do impoſe
uch things, as they themſelves are not convinc'd are uſeful and expedient,
hey are anſwerable to God for ſuch arbitrary impoſitions. It is ſuffi-
ient for the ſubject, that what is exacted of him is lawful; and if he
an be fully perſwaded in his own mind of the lawfulneſs of it, he in-
ocently may, he in duty muſt ſubmit unto it.

That men may obey any commands of their Superiours, which they
their conſciences think unlawful, we are far from affirming; or that
ny other motives ſhould be us'd to induce men to comply with the
eceiv'd uſages of the Church, than ſuch as are proper to inform their
nderſtandings, and to rectifie their miſtakes about theſe matters, we
re far from deſiring: what hath been now ſaid, hath been ſaid with an
ntention to juſtifie our own practice, by ſhewing that the objections
which are made againſt theſe uſages, whatever weight they may have
in the opinion of thoſe who make them, are not of force enough to pre-
vail upon men of ſound judgment to diſlike ſuch uſages, much leſs to

leave the Communion of our Church for the ſake of them. Thoſe objections which we have now conſider'd, are level'd againſt all the Ceremonies of our Church in common: there are ſome others made againſt each of them ſeverally, which we may perhaps take ſome other time to conſider.

All the application I ſhall now make of what hath been ſaid upon this ſubject, ſhall be this: Let us who are convinc'd of the lawfulneſs and expedience of ſuch Rites, make a due and reverent uſe of them; ſince we know they are intended only for decency, for order, and for edification, let us uſe them in ſuch a manner, as may beſt miniſter to thoſe great ends; and by our decent and religious deportment in the *Houſe of God*, let us prove that they may be ſubſervient to ſuch noble purpoſes: Let us expreſs our zeal for them rather by a dutiful obſervance of them our ſelves, than by raſh cenſures of thoſe, who out of a miſtaken conſcience ſcruple the uſage of them: Let our zeal bear a due proportion to the worth, and price of thoſe things, which we are zealous for; let us neither undervalue them, as wholly uſeleſs and inſignificant to the advancement of piety; nor over-rate them, as equal to the more ſubſtantial duties of the Goſpel; let us look upon them only as ornaments of worſhip, and not of the ſame dignity and intrinſick excellence, as the *weightier* parts *of the law*: Let us not lay as great a ſtreſs upon the Croſs in Baptiſm, which is only a ſignificant Rite and Symbol of our owning the faith of Chriſt crucified, as we do upon fighting manfully under Chriſt's banner againſt the world, the fleſh, and the devil: Let us not think the particular poſture of body we uſe in receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper a matter of the ſame importance, as we do the poſture of ſoul and diſpoſition of heart, wherewith we receive it: in ſhort, Let us carefully remember, and ſo regulate our opinions and actions, as thoſe who do remember, that *the kingdom of Go* Rom. 14. 17. *is not meat and drink*, conſiſteth not ſo much in the uſe, or forbearance of indifferent Rites, as it doth in *righteouſneſs, peace, and joy in the holy Ghoſt.*

In *which graces that we may more and more abound, God of his infinite mercy grant thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

SER-

SERMON IX.

Of religious Rites and Ceremonies.

1 Cor. XIV. 40.

Let all things be done decently, and in order.

The ſecond Sermon on this Text.

IN a late diſcourſe on theſe words I offer'd to you a ſhort and modeſt defence of thoſe Rites and Ceremonies, which are preſcrib'd and practis'd by our Church; not with any evil and uncharitable purpoſe of upbraiding thoſe who diſſent from us, or of exciting your diſpleaſure againſt them for ſuch their diſſent; but with an oneſt intention to juſtifie our ſelves, and to ſhew, that we may with good conſcience practiſe, what they, we hope, out of conſcience alſo, but, as we think, a miſtaken and miſguided one, do diſapprove. What is in it ſelf lawful, ſo that it may be innocently comply'd with; what is in it ſelf not only lawful, but neceſſary, ſo that it cannot innocently be omitted, is yet ſinful to thoſe, who are in their judgments ſtrongly, tho' wrongfully, perſwaded of its unlawfulneſs; to do what we verily think God hath forbid, is to do what he hath really forbid: for tho' the action it ſelf be not by name prohibited, yet the acting againſt our judgments is always forbidden. And as it is abſolutely neceſſary, that we ſhould forbear the doing of what we are fully perſwaded is ſinful, whether ſuch perſwaſion be well or ill-grounded; ſo it is at leaſt highly expedient, that we ſhould have a poſitive perſwaſion of the lawfulneſs of what we do. For tho' perhaps thoſe have been miſtaken, who have laid it down for a general and uncontroverted maxim, that every one ſins who allows himſelf in any practice, concerning the lawfulneſs of which he hath any doubt; and tho', I believe, it may be prov'd, that we in ſome caſes innocently may, and in other caſes are in duty bound, to do ſuch things, of which we have ſome doubt whether they are lawful or not; yet I think that in actions of great weight and moment, in the duties of Religion and divine Worſhip, in ſuch practices as we have often occaſion to repeat, we ought to be thoroughly inform'd and fully perſwaded of their lawfulneſs; and that in ſuch caſes it is not ſufficient that we have no reaſon to think them ſinful, but it is requiſite that we have good reaſon to think them innocent; it is not enough for us to entertain no opinion of their being criminal, but we muſt labour alſo after a poſitive perſwaſion of their being warrantable.

He, who follows the commands of his governours implicitly; he who doth what he is requir'd to do, without ever examining into the lawfulneſs of it, hath no perſwaſion, that what is exacted of him is ſinful, becauſe he forms no judgment at all about it, and therefore hath no more reaſon to judge it unlawful, than lawful; but he who would be fully convinc'd of the lawfulneſs of a command, muſt conſider and examine it carefully; muſt compare it with the law of God, and muſt by ſuch comparing it be fully ſatisfied, that it carries in it no oppoſition to any precept of the divine law, before he can arrive at a poſitive, well-grounded, and full perſwaſion of its lawfulneſs. It is ſuch a perſwaſion as this, which men of reaſon and capacity ought to aim at, concerning the lawfulneſs of thoſe Rites and Ceremonies, which are preſcrib'd by our Church. For tho' I ſhould be loath to paſs ſentence of condemnation upon all thoſe, who comply with ſuch uſages, merely in conformity to their ſuperiours, without giving themſelves the leiſure to examine, what may be ſaid for and againſt them, and who finding no reaſon to think ill of them, do for that very reaſon, and no other, think well of them; yet I think that all, who are able to judge for themſelves; all, who would approve themſelves to be wiſe, diſcerning, and judicious perſons; all, who are deſirous to juſtifie their own actions to themſelves and to others, ſhould diligently enquire into the reaſons and grounds of their actions, ſhould weigh carefully, as well what may be ſaid againſt, as what may be ſaid in defence of their ſo acting: ſo that their perſwaſion of the lawfulneſs of what they do, may not be owing to their want of enquiring, but may be the effect of a ſerious, deliberate, and impartial enquiry.

If we have no better reaſon to think an action lawful, than *that* we know of no exception that is made to it, our opinion concerning its lawfulneſs will be apt to be ſhaken, when exceptions unforeſeen by us, and therefore unprovided againſt, are made to it; but when we have conſider'd ſuch objections as are, or may be brought againſt its lawfulneſs, and upon duly weighing them have found them to be of little or no moment, we ſhall then be fixt and eſtabliſh'd in our judgments, and having thus firſt *prov'd all things*, ſhall be the better diſpos'd to *hold faſt that which is good.* 1 Theſſ. 5.21.

That we might thus ſtedfaſtly adhere to the Communion of our Church, that this our ſtedfaſt adherence might be built upon a firm perſwaſion of the lawfulneſs of ſuch uſages, to which our compliance is requir'd, I thought it not improper to enquire into the lawfulneſs of ſuch obſervances, and to clear them from thoſe objections, that are brought againſt them by ſuch as diſſent from us, on account of ſuch preſcrib'd Ceremonies. And becauſe thoſe, who are not ſatisfi'd concerning ſuch ſuſpected uſages, do either doubt of the power of the Church in general to impoſe any Rites not commanded by God's Word, as apprehending the pretence to ſuch a power deſtructive of our chriſtian liberty, and an uſurpation upon the kingdom of Chriſt, the ſole King and Law-giver in his own kingdom; or elſe allowing ſuch a power in the Governours of the Church to impoſe ſome Rites not enjoyn'd by God's Word, do yet except againſt the particular Rites by our Church preſcrib'd, as having ſome eſpecial fault peculiar to them; ſo that the impoſing of them

m is an abuſe of that power, which is confeſſedly lodg'd in the Church,
refore in order to remove theſe difficulties, I thought it proper,

I. To ſhew in general, that the Governours of the Church have ſuch a power to preſcribe indifferent Rites and Ceremonies; and

II. To ſhew more particularly, that the Governours of our Church have not abus'd this power by the injunction of thoſe Ceremonies, which are preſcrib'd to thoſe of our Communion.

UNDER the firſt head I have endeavour'd to prove, that our lawful
vernours requiring lawful things are to be obey'd; that what things
not by God forbidden, are lawful, and therefore may by our Go-
nours be enjoyn'd; that there are ſome things eſſential, ſome acci-
tal to the worſhip of God; that the former are fixt, the latter va-
ble, the former eſtabliſh'd by the Word of God, from which we may
in any wiſe depart, the latter left by the ſame Word of God to the
ermination of our Governours, to which we are requir'd dutifully
ſubmit; that decency and order and edification in general are pro-
ed for by the rules of God's Word, but that what is decent, orderly,
edifying, according to the variety of times and places, is left to
deciſion of thoſe who are in authority; that therefore thoſe who
ſcribe Rites and Ceremonies, not as eſſential parts of divine wor-
p, but as proper ornaments of it; not as having in them any ſuper-
ural efficacy, but as they contribute to decency and order; not as
ging the conſciences of all Chriſtians, but as proper to be practis'd
thoſe, who owe obedience to them by whom they are enjoyn'd, do
uſurp any power not committed to them by God; but do exerciſe
truſt, which God has repos'd in them; and acting in his name, and
authority deriv'd from him, may, and ought in conſcience to be
ey'd.

UNDER the Second head I endeavour'd farther to prove, that what
s ſaid of the authority of Governours to preſcribe, and the duty of
bjects to comply with Rites and Ceremonies not forbidden by the law
God, is applicable to the particular Rites enjoyn'd and obſerv'd by
Church, as being not unlawful to be practis'd upon any of thoſe
counts, upon which they are ſcrupled by thoſe who refuſe, and who
ign reaſons why they judge themſelves bound to refuſe, compliance
th them. The objections brought againſt ſuch uſages, firſt as having
o near an agreement with the Church of *Rome*, and ſecondly as tend-
g to ſcandalize weak Chriſtians, we have already examin'd.

I PROCEED now to conſider another objection, urg'd againſt them
order to render them odious and unpopular, which is this, that, as
the practice of them we ſhew too much reſemblance with the *Romiſh*,
at the ſame time we ſhew too little correſpondence with the *Re-*
rm'd Churches abroad.

NOW were this allegation true, that the Rites practis'd by us, were
'd by no other *Reform'd* Church but ours, were it alſo true that ſuch
on-uſage of them inferr'd their diſlike of theſe Rites; yet would not
ch their diſapprovement of them prove them to be either unlawful,
r inexpedient. What is more equal and reaſonable, than that we ſhould
xpect of others that liberty, which we allow willingly to others; that
here there is no neceſſity of conſenting with them, there we may dif-
er from them without offence? Other Churches uſe thoſe Rites, which

to them ſeem beſt; we uſe thoſe, which ſeem beſt to us. What reaſon obliges us to follow their example, rather than them to follow ours? We impoſe no laws upon them; if they ſhould, as they do not, impoſe laws upon us, what obligation are we under to ſubmit to ſuch impoſition? Our Church challenges no ſuch authority to command others; our Church owns no ſuch authority in others to give laws to her: Her opinion in this matter ſhe hath freely declar'd to all the world, that "it "is not neceſſary that Traditions or Ceremonies be in all places one, "or utterly like; for at all times they have been diverſe, and chang'd "according to the diverſity of countries, times, and men's manners, ſo "that nothing be ordain'd againſt God's Word; that every particular or "national Church hath authority to ordain, change and aboliſh Ceremonies and Rites of the Church, ordain'd only by man's authority, "ſo that all things be done to edifying." This power which ſhe readily allows to all other Churches as their undoubted right, we think it reaſonable ſhould be allow'd to ours, as having an equal right with them: as they are not accountable to us for the exerciſe of their right, ſo neither are we accountable to them for the uſe of ours: as it would b raſhneſs in us to paſs any harſh judgment to their prejudice, ſo would it be too haſty in them to expreſs a contempt or diſlike of what i publickly practis'd by us.

BUT we have no reaſon to complain of other *Reform'd* Churches upon this article; for they do not bring theſe accuſations againſt us, bu are griev'd to find their names made uſe of to our diſparagement. We can ſafely appeal to their publick Confeſſions, and to the ſuffrages o their moſt eminent Divines; they are very large in their praiſes of ou Eſtabliſhment, and their judgments concerning the Rites and Ceremonies preſcrib'd and practis'd in our Church, are very different from th opinions of thoſe amongſt our ſelves, who diſſent from us. *Should w* ſpeak as great and glorious things concerning our Church, as *theſe ou Reform'd* Brethren have done, we ſhould be liable to the imputation o vain-boaſting: ſhould we expreſs our ſelves concerning thoſe who *diſ*ſent from us in the ſame plain language, as the Writers of other *Reform'd* Churches have ſpoke, we ſhould perhaps be accus'd of being *the* very *gall of bitterneſs*, and of bringing a falſe accuſation againſt ou Brethren.

THOSE who are acquainted with the practices and opinions of foreign Churches, know very well, that the *Lutheran* Churches, thoſe which made the firſt and earlieſt Proteſtations againſt the corruption o *Rome*, and to whom therefore upon that account a great reſpect is due from ſuch as are their younger brethren, do uſe the very ſame Ceremonies with thoſe that are practis'd by us; that they have retain'd al that we have, and many that we have dropt; that their averſion to *Popery*, tho' as ſtrong and as deeply rooted as that of any the greateſt abhorrers of it, hath never carried them ſo far as to make them look upo every Rite us'd in that Church as an accurſed and abominable thing that they neither look upon the Surplice as an Anti-chriſtian garment, nor upon the Croſs in Baptiſm, or kneeling at the Sacrament as badges and ſymbols of Idolatry, but do obſerve theſe uſages in the worſhip of God without any fear of contracting any defilement therefrom, or o offending God, or of ſcandalizing good Chriſtians thereby: that thoſe Churches which are emphatically call'd the *Reform'd*, tho' they have not retain'd the ſame Ceremonies, yet neither do they condemn thoſe

that

hat have; that theſe never ſcruple to communicate with the others on ccount of ſuch Ceremonies; that when they have ſometimes held Communion with each other, the *Calviniſt* with the *Lutheran*, they have ch alternately conform'd to the Rites of the other; that when they ve refus'd to communicate together, they have never aſſign'd this difrence of Rites as the ground of ſuch refuſal, but have declar'd, that, if her obſtacles were remov'd, this diſagreement would be no hindrance f their mutual Communion; that theſe *Reform'd* Churches properly call'd having not the ſame objections againſt us, as they have againſt e *Lutherans*, do not at all ſcruple Communion with us, or refuſe mpliance with our Ceremonies; that both their people and their Paors joyn with us in our publick worſhip, and in the obſervance of ſuch ites; that it is their avow'd doctrine, as well as ours, that every naional Church hath power to make laws for her ſelf in indifferent things; hat, tho' they do not enjoyn and practiſe the ſame as we do, yet they reſcribe and uſe others as liable to exception as ours; that they require onformity to ſuch their injunctions from thoſe under their command; hat, when they have been ask'd to declare their judgment concerning hoſe, who refuſe to conform to our Church on account of the Rites reſcrib'd by it, they have not fear'd to pronounce them guilty of ſchiſm r ſuch their refuſal.

THESE being the practices, theſe the ſentiments of the *Reform'd* hurches abroad, our pretended diſagreement with them is manifeſtly groundleſs objection againſt compliance with the Ceremonies eſtabliſh'd the Church: with ſome of theſe we do agree, and as good reaſon ay be alleg'd, why we ſhould agree with them, as with thoſe from whom we differ. If the uſage of theſe Ceremonies is to be condemn'd, ecauſe by ſuch uſage we differ from ſome *Proteſtants*, the non-uſage of them will be equally obnoxious to blame, becauſe by ſuch non-uſage we ſhould differ from other Proteſtants: If we are call'd upon to lay ſide theſe Rites, that we may make nearer approaches to thoſe our Brethren who have no ſuch uſages, we muſt at the ſame time take care hat we do not offend on the other ſide, by ſetting our ſelves at too great diſtance from thoſe our Brethren alſo who are in poſſeſſion of ſuch ſages, and in no diſpoſition to depart from them. But theſe are matters of a politick conſideration, and which in no wiſe affect the conſcience one way or other. Such views as theſe may be neceſſary to Governours, when they are to judge of the expedience or inexpedience of making or abrogating laws; but are not neceſſary to private men, when they are to judge of the lawfulneſs or unlawfulneſs of ſubmitting to laws already eſtabliſh'd. Our queſtion at preſent is not, whether ſuch Rites are fit or unfit to be enjoyn'd, which is a queſtion too hard for us to determine; but whether when enjoyn'd, they may with a good conſcience be comply'd with. And if in this matter it is thought proper, that we ſhould regulate our opinion by the judgment of the *Reform'd* Churches abroad, we muſt think compliance our duty; becauſe even thoſe Churches, who have not thought it expedient to preſcribe the ſame Rites to their own people, have yet declar'd it to be their judgment, that thoſe amongſt us, who refuſe to obey ſuch preſcriptions, are Diſturbers of the peace of the Church by reaſon of ſuch their unjuſtifiable diſobedience.

IF what hath been ſaid may be thought ſufficient to take off the edge of thoſe objections, which are made againſt all our Rites and Ceremonies in common, it will not be difficult to clear our ſelves from thoſe charges that are level'd againſt each of them ſeverally. For as far as I am able to judge, the main force of thoſe arguments, that are pointed againſt any of theſe Rites, conſiſts in proving them to be eſpecially blameable upon ſome, or all of thoſe accounts, for which all of them in groſs are affirm'd to be blame-worthy. For whether the Surplice, or Croſs in Baptiſm, or kneeling at the Sacrament be found fault with, they are accuſed, either as acts of ſuperſtition and *will-worſhip*, being not commanded by God, and therefore not to be ſuperadded to the divine worſhip by men; or as practis'd by the Church of *Rome*, and therefore not to be us'd by thoſe who have renounc'd the errors of that Church; or as offenſive to weak brethren, and therefore to be forborn for fear of giving ſcandal; or as not practis'd by our Brethren of the *Reformation*, and therefore not to be retain'd by us, leſt thereby we break that correſpondence which ought to be kept up between thoſe of the ſame profeſſion, and the ſame purity of faith and doctrine: ſo that thoſe anſwers which have been made to the general objections, will in a great meaſure ſuffice for our vindication againſt thoſe charges, that are brought againſt particular uſages.

OUR Miniſters, when they officiate, wear white garments; but *they* don't think, that thoſe prayers which they make thus apparell'd are more acceptable to God, or more beneficial to themſelves, or to the people, for whom and with whom they pray, than if they pray'd in black. We attribute no holineſs to theſe garments; if they contribute any thing to the decency of divine worſhip, as we think they do, we look upon that as a ſufficient reaſon for their being enjoyn'd. If veſtments of the ſame colour, or ſhape, or kind were worn by the *Levitical* Prieſts, we don't think that we judaize in wearing the like; ſince we don't wear them as holy garments, or as preſcrib'd by the law of *Moſes*, for then we ſhould alſo think our ſelves bound to wear the other Sacerdotal veſtments by the ſame law appointed, but as comely garments, ordain'd to be worn by the command of our Superiours; ſuch, as before their command went forth, were wholly in themſelves indifferent, and ſuch as, where their command doth not reach, continue in their former indifference. No one is ſo delicately nice, as to ſcruple the uſe of particular and diſtinguiſhing habits us'd for the ſolemnity of other publick actions; and it will be hard to aſſign any reaſon, why Princes on the throne, and Judges on the bench, may be array'd in different garments from what at other times, and upon other occaſions they uſe, which will not juſtifie Miniſters in the uſe of ſpecial veſtments in the performance of their ſacred Office: If ſuch diſtinction of habits hath any ſubſerviency to the creating a reverence for their character, or a regard to the dignity of thoſe functions they are employ'd in; this reverence may contribute to as good purpoſes in the caſe before us, as in the other caſes; and it may therefore be as proper to make uſe of theſe means to make Religion venerable in the opinions of men, as to procure the like veneration by the ſame means to civil offices and employments.

IF ſome have thought purity and beauty fitly repreſented by white garments; if, becauſe the Church in the *Apocalypſe* is deſcrib'd as *array'd in fine linen, white and clean*, and this white *linen* is interpreted to be *the righteouſneſs of the Saints*, ſome alluding hereunto have judg'd the very garments, which Prieſts wear, may be proper remembrancers to them of that righteouſneſs, wherewith they ought to be cloath'd; yet, this doth not prove, that they were intended by the Church, which Rev. 19. 14.

impoſes

poſes them, as ſymbolical ſigns repreſentative of holineſs. And tho'
rtainly it can be no ſin to take hints of our duty from any objects, that
ay put us in mind of it; yet thoſe who want not ſuch mean helps as
eſe to holineſs, or who ſcruple the uſe of ſuch ſymbols to ſuch reli-
ous purpoſes, may conſcientiouſly comply with Ceremonies, which
e not impos'd on them under ſuch a notion, or for ſuch an end and
rpoſe, but merely as decent and orderly. But be it allow'd after all
at hath, or may be ſaid in defence of this Rite, that the wearing ſuch
garment is ſuperſtitious, and upon that, or any other account unlaw-
l; yet this guilt is perſonal to the Miniſter, and cannot ſpread it ſelf
far, as to infect the people who attend on his Miniſtry. It will not,
believe, be thought a greater ſin for a Miniſter to pray with a Surplice,
an without faith, without attention, without reverence, without hu-
ility, without the qualifications which are in the Word of God re-
ir'd to render our prayers acceptable, or with any of the contrary diſ-
ſitions, which are ſure to render them abominable in the ſight of God;
d yet ſhould he offend by reaſon of any ſuch blemiſhes or defects, the
ilt thereof would be thought to terminate within his own ſoul, and
ould not be ſuſpected to taint thoſe who joyn'd in ſuch prayers with
tter affections.

AND as we think the uſe of ſuch a garment may upon theſe princi-
es be juſtified; ſo we hope alſo that we are free from all blame, in
ning ſuch as we baptize, with the ſign of the Croſs. Of this ſign, we
ink, we have no reaſon to be aſham'd, who profeſs to believe in a cru-
fied Saviour. That no grace is confer'd on perſons thus ſign'd, by the
e of it, we readily own; but if the obſervance of it, whilſt it is us'd,
all excite any pious diſpoſitions in thoſe who aſſiſt at Baptiſm, they
will have reaſon to be thankful for ſuch inſtruction. For if Signs may
be as inſtructive as Words, it will be difficult to conceive, why it ſhould
be more unlawful for the Church to teach her people by this method,
than by her doctrine; or why it ſhould be any more a ſin to inſtruct them
y Signs which God hath not inſtituted, than by Homilies or Sermons
which God hath not inſpir'd. If we ſhould attribute as much efficacy to
e doctrine of the Church, as to the Word of God; or if we ſhould aſcribe
e ſame energy to Signs appointed by the Church, as to Sacraments
ſtituted by Chriſt, we ſhould then be guilty of unpardonable pre-
umption. But as the Church cannot be accus'd of adding to the Word
f God by her Catechiſms, by her Homilies, by her Articles, or by any
ther method of informing her children in their duty, becauſe ſhe owns
he Scriptures to be ſufficient to that purpoſe, and theſe only to be ſub-
rdinate helps to the better underſtanding of Scripture; ſo with much
eſs juſtice is ſhe accus'd of adding to the Sacraments of Chriſt by the
ſe of a ſignificant Ceremony, which is own'd to have nothing in it of
he nature of a Sacrament, as being not ordain'd by Chriſt, not any mean
f conveying his grace to us, not any pledge to aſſure us thereof.

THE Church hath been careful to inſtruct her children in the true
eaſons for which ſhe hath retain'd, and the proper uſes which they
ught to make of this innocent Ceremony: ſhe hath declar'd it to be no
part of the Sacrament, no eſſential part of worſhip, no neceſſary du-
y of Chriſtianity, no new covenanting or engaging Sign: ſhe declares
o the world that ſhe uſes it not to thoſe ends, abuſes it not to thoſe
evil purpoſes, as the *Papiſts* do; but only as an eccleſiaſtical Conſti-
tution, an inoffenſive Rite; not to offer, exhibit, give, or ſeal grace

to

to us, as doth the Sacrament, but to ſignify, and declare our profeſſion of faith in a crucified Saviour; to ſhew our communion with the ancient Chriſtians, who us'd this ſign; to expreſs our undaunted reſolutions of continuing faithful ſervants and ſoldiers to that our Maſter and General, under whoſe banner we are not by this Sign, but by our Baptiſm, liſted and engag'd to fight conſtantly againſt the world, the fleſh, and the Devil. Now if this Ceremony may be us'd to theſe ends, if the Church requires that it ſhould be us'd to theſe ends, and no other; it is no objection againſt the uſe of it, that it either hath been formerly, or may be again abus'd to other ends. Becauſe it is a Sign, unthinking men may chance to miſ-apprehend it, or deſigning men may take occaſion to miſrepreſent it, as if it pretended to the dignity of a Sacrament; but thoſe, who will chuſe to inform themſelves of the doctrine of the Church, rather from her own profeſſions, than from thoſe who are liable to miſtake, or reſolv'd to miſ-judge her, will be ſatisfied that "the Church of *England*, to ſpeak in her own words, "doth hold and teach, that the ſign of the "Croſs us'd in Baptiſm is no part of the ſubſtance of that Sacrament. "For when the Miniſter, dipping the infant in water, or pouring water upon the face of it, as the manner alſo is, hath pronounc'd theſe words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the "Holy Ghoſt, the infant is fully and perfectly baptiz'd: ſo as the ſign "of the Croſs being afterwards us'd, doth neither add any thing to the "virtue and perfection of Baptiſm, nor being omitted, doth detract any "thing from the effect and ſubſtance of it." Let not therefore any ſcrupulous perſons fright themſelves with a phantom, that hath no being but in their own ſcar'd imaginations; let them not be afraid of having a new Sacrament obtruded upon them, when it is evident by the avow'd doctrine of the Church, that their compliance is requir'd only to a harmleſs and indifferent Ceremony.

As to the other Rite objected againſt, kneeling at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we ſhall have a more proper occaſion to vindicate that, when we ſhall be call'd to treat of the reverence due to that moſt ſolemn Ordinance. At preſent I ſhall chuſe rather to ſpeak to another objection againſt our Ceremonies, which tho' no formidable one, yet it lies more in your power, than in mine, to confute it.

It is pretended to be matter of experience, that there is far leſs growth in knowledge and piety in thoſe congregations, where theſe Ceremonies have been regularly obſerv'd, than in thoſe where they have been wholly laid aſide; that ſuch as have been moſt eminent for their zeal for theſe external parts of worſhip, have ſhewn leaſt regard to the ſubſtantial duties of Religion; and that therefore it is reaſonable to lay aſide the uſe of theſe Rites, that we may apply our ſelves the more vigorouſly to the diſcharge of what is on all hands agreed to be the indiſpenſible duty of ſincere Chriſtians. Now, tho' it muſt, to the ſhame of ſome of our Communion, be acknowledg'd, that a pretended warmth for theſe religious uſages, and a real diſregard to the moſt important duties of Chriſtianity, do ſometimes go together; yet I hope we are able to prove by experience, as well as from the nature of the thing, that decency of external worſhip, and ſanctity of life and converſation, are not utterly incompatible. It is I preſume poſſible for one who behaves himſelf devoutly and reverently at Church, notwithſtanding ſuch his outward reverence, if not the more by reaſon of ſuch reverence, to fear God, and to keep his commandments. There is no repugnancy between kneeling at the Sacrament,

ient, and religiouſly obſerving thoſe vows which we there make. He
ho at his Baptiſm was ſign'd with the Croſs, is not under any greater
capacity than others, nor doth he pretend to be under leſs obligation
an others, to renounce the devil, the world, and the fleſh.

Our Church hath no where given any encouragement to any to hope
r Salvation from the obſervance of her Rites, whilſt they live in habi-
al diſobedience to the laws God. The neceſſity of good works, to
eak modeſtly, is as much inſiſted on by thoſe who think they can in-
cently uſe, as by thoſe who ſcruple the uſe of, indifferent Ceremo-
es. Whatever opinions we may entertain concerning the ſin and
nger of ſchiſm, we are not ſo apt to pronounce judgment againſt thoſe
o ſeparate from us, as againſt thoſe who live wickedly, and die impe-
tently in our Communion. We think indeed that Salvation is not ſo ea-
y to be attain'd out of the Church, as in it; for we conſider that God's
omiſes to his people are not abſolute, but conditional: and amongſt
e other conditions, which entitle Chriſtians to the gracious promiſes
de in the Goſpel, we look upon this to be one, that they do not un-
rrantably ſeparate themſelves from their Brethren, but continue peace-
y within the pale of the Church. We do not with the *Romaniſts*
confine Salvation to our own Church, as if it were impoſſible for any
be ſay'd who are out of it; but we are afraid, that they do ſomewhat
danger their Salvation, who being by the Laws of God oblig'd to
ey their lawful Governours, requiring of them nothing that is ſinful,
without juſt cauſe break themſelves off from that body of Chriſt, of
ich they ought to continue Members. But ſtill we don't lay ſo great
treſs upon communicating with the Church, as upon living *ſoberly*, Tit. 2. 12.
hteouſly, and godly in this preſent world: we think *wrath*, *ſtrife*, Gal. 5. 20.
ditions, *hereſies*, ſchiſms to be dangerous ſins, and neceſſary to be
oided by all conſcientious Chriſtians; but we don't expunge out of
e catalogue of mortal ſins, *adultery*, *fornication*, *uncleanneſs*, *drunken-
ſs*, *revellings*, *and ſuch like*, or forbear to tell our people, *that* whilſt v. 21.
ey do ſuch things, they certainly *ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God*.
e are careful to inſtruct thoſe committed to our charge in the great
fference there is between the Ritual parts of God's worſhip, even ſuch
God himſelf hath inſtituted, and ſuch duties as are in themſelves in-
inſically, eſſentially, and unalterably good. And certainly thoſe who
e taught that the poſitive laws of God are not of equal weight with
e duties of morality, will be in no danger of thinking the obſervance
mere human Rites equally momentous with the keeping of God's ſta-
tes; and ſtill much leſs of fancying, that the obſervance of the former
ill compenſate for the neglect of the latter.

Even under the *Moſaick* Diſpenſation, which provided ſo punctual-
for the exterior part of worſhip, it is plain, that the main drift and
m of that Law was not a formality of outward worſhip, but a per-
ct and uniform obedience. *I ſpake not to your fathers*, ſaith God to Jerem. 7. 22. 23.
e Iſraelites, *nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out
the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or ſacrifices*; that is, I
id not principally require theſe: *But this thing commanded I them,
ying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye ſhall be my peo-
le; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it
ay be well unto you.* It was not Circumciſion that diſcriminated the
ſraelites from the *Heathen*, but true holineſs: If the *Iſraelites* ſinn'd,
s did the *Heathen*, notwithſtanding they were the peculium of God,

Jerem. 9. 25. 26. they were to be puniſh'd as ſeverely as were the *Heathen*: *Behold the days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will puniſh all them which are circumcis'd with the uncircumcis'd; Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab: for all theſe nations are uncircumcis'd, and all the houſe of Iſrael are uncircumcis'd in the heart.*

And if Rituals were to give place to Moral duties even under the Law, much more are they to do ſo under the more ſpiritual diſpenſation of the Goſpel, which conſiſts not in Forms and Ceremonies, but in more ſolid and ſubſtantial duties. As therefore the Scripture hath diſtinguiſh'd, as the Church guiding her ſelf by Scripture hath diſtinguiſh'd, ſo let us be careful to diſtinguiſh, between the leſſer and the greater things of the Law. Let us ſhew by our lives and converſations, that we don't place ſo much Religion in the obſervance, as ſome of thoſe who differ from us do in the non-obſervance, of theſe Ceremonies: Let us by a ſtrict obedience to all God's ſtatutes, and a dutiful compliance with the rules of our Church, ſhew that we eſteem the former, as commanding things abſolutely neceſſary to be done; the latter, as enjoyning things not ſafely to be left undone: Let us remember, that *in Chriſt Jeſus, neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion*; neither a ſuperſtitious obſervance, nor a ſuperſtitious omiſſion, of outward Rites; *but a new creature. And as many as walk according* to this apoſtolical *rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Iſrael of God.*

Galat. 6. 15.

v. 16.

SERMON X.

An enquiry into the riſe and antiquity of the Lent-Faſt.

Matt. IV. 2.

And when he had faſted forty days, and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

WE are now entring upon that holy time, which from the earlieſt ages of the Church hath uſually been employ'd, and which by the directions of our own Church ought to be employ'd, in more than ordinary acts of devotion, humiliation, and religious abſtinence. And upon this occaſion, it may not be improper or unſeaſonable to make a reſearch into the original of this pious obſervance, to ſee upon what grounds it was firſt taken up, and hath been ſince continued; and to conſider, how far it is neceſſary, expedient, or lawful for us to comply with ſuch an uſage.

Several have been the opinions of learned men concerning the riſe, and antiquity of the Lent or Ante-paſchal-days of abſtinence: ſome will have them of divine, ſome of apoſtolical, ſome of eccleſiaſtical, ſome of merely civil inſtitution. It is generally preſum'd, that the obſervance of Lent amongſt us, ſince the *Reformation,* hath no other bottom to ſtand upon than the municipal law of the Land, and that it is by that enjoyn'd, ſo far as it is enjoyn'd, not out of any religious view, but merely out of a political principle; not for any benefit to the ſouls of men, but for the common Weal. But he that ſhall peruſe our Canons, Homilies, and Liturgy; he that ſhall conſult even the Statutes of the Land made ſince the *Reformation,* will find that the obſervance of Lent is enjoyn'd by the State, as well as by the Church, for the encreaſe of piety, as well as of cattle; and out of this eſpecial conſideration, amongſt others, "that due and godly abſtinence is a mean to virtue, and to ſubdue mens bodies to their ſouls and ſpirits:" which are the expreſs words of our laws. Stat. Edv. VI. An. 3. cap. 19. Tho' therefore we may not be able to go ſo high as thoſe, who plead that the obſervance of Lent is of divine right, and requir'd by the poſitive law of God; yet I think we cannot, without injury to truth and to our Church, ſink ſo low as thoſe do, who will have it to be a merely political conſtitution. Thoſe who have pleaded for a divine inſtitution of the Lent-faſt, have generally inſiſted on the practice of our Saviour, mention'd in thoſe words, which I have now read unto you: *When he had faſted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.*

SOME earlier Writers, as well as the Divines of the *Romiſh* Church, have thought the example of Chriſt in this caſe equivalent to a precept; and that becauſe our Saviour is here ſaid in the Goſpel to have *faſted forty days and forty nights*, we ought, as far as we can, to imitate him, and to obſerve an anniverſary Faſt of the ſame duration. But it is a great diſadvantage to this ground aſſign'd for ſuch a Faſt, that tho' it is not purely a novel pretence, yet it has not the ſuffrage of the moſt primitive antiquity. Thoſe who in the firſt ages of the Church kept a Faſt before Eaſter, never aſſign'd this as a reaſon of that obſervance; never urg'd it as an example, which they thought themſelves in ſtrict duty oblig'd to follow. Some of them indeed cited the authority of our Saviour for their faſting, but then they did not urge his example, but his command: for they well knew, that his example was not in all caſes neceſſary to be imitated; tho' his commands were, in all ages, by all Chriſtians, to whom they were given, to be neceſſarily obey'd.

SEVERAL there were among the primitive Chriſtians, who kept a Faſt before Eaſter; but then they extended it not to forty days, but confin'd it within a much narrower compaſs; which it is not to be conceiv'd perſons of their ſtrict piety and zeal would have done, had they thought Chriſt's Faſt in the wilderneſs a pattern, after which they were bound exactly to copy. If it be a neceſſary conſequence, that becauſe Chriſt faſted forty days, we are for that reaſon oblig'd to faſt preciſely ſo many, it will be hard to give a good reaſon, why the primitive Chriſtians, who knew how far, and in what reſpects Chriſt is to be imitated by us, much better and much more certainly than we do, ſhould allow themſelves any the leaſt latitude in departing from his example: and it will be ſtill harder to give a good reaſon, why among the many motives that they urg'd for the obſervance of this Faſt, they did not chiefly inſiſt upon this precedent. Now it is certain, that for ſome ages after ſuch a Faſt obtain'd in the Church, it was not properly a Faſt of forty days that was kept, ſince ſix weeks only were allotted for this Faſt, and of all thoſe weeks the Lord's days were by the rules of the Church forbidden to be ſpent in faſting: ſo that we muſt either own, that the Faſt of our Saviour doth not ſo far oblige Chriſtians, as that they are ſtrictly bound to faſt as many days as he did; or we muſt own, that all the Chriſtians of thoſe ages, all the Biſhops who had the care of Chriſt's Church, even the Biſhops of *Rome* themſelves, whom ſome will not acknowledge to be fallible, did not imitate Chriſt in that manner they ought to have done, nor did teach their people, or know themſelves, how far Chriſt is to be imitated.

IF the Faſt of our Saviour is to be the rule and ſtandard of our Faſts, it is not eaſie to give a ſatisfactory account, why we ſhould be bound to imitate it, as to its duration, and as to no one other circumſtance. Chriſt faſted once in the courſe of his life for forty days: if therefore we may not depart from this pattern, we may not yearly obſerve a Faſt, which he never repeated. Chriſt's example lays no obligation upon

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n us to faſt no oftner than he did; how comes it then to lay an in-iſpenſible obligation upon us to faſt as long as he did? Chriſt faſted orty days: this example of Chriſt we, it is ſaid, are bound to imitate; llowing that we do imitate it by keeping forty days of abſtinence, tho' e do not, as we cannot, keep ſo long a total Faſt, yet by once keep-ng ſuch a period, we do anſwer all the obligation that this example of hriſt lays upon us; and therefore that example cannot be urg'd as ob-ging us annually to repeat that Faſt.

If it be alleg'd, as by ſome it is, that we are not once in our lives, ut every year to wage war with the Tempter, and therefore ought early to prepare our ſelves for this ſpiritual engagement by faſting, his will prove, that we ought to faſt every day, as well as every year. or we are to war with this enemy, not once in the beginning of the ear, but continually thro' the whole courſe of it: he has not his fixt nd ſtated times of attacking us, but ſets upon us every ſeaſon of the ear, every day, every hour, and every moment: And tho' Faſting muſt e acknowledg'd to be a good guard againſt ſome of his aſſaults; yet Chriſtians have other arms, by which they may, with God's aſſiſtance, repel nd conquer this enemy. Tho' we are every day tempted by him, we are ot bound to keep every day a religious Faſt; and therefore, tho' we are early tempted by him, this alone is not a ſufficient foundation for an nnual celebration of ſuch a Faſt. It is allow'd, that we are not bound o ſpend the ſame time of the year in Faſting, as Chriſt did; ſince there-ore the Faſt which our Saviour kept is not ſo ſtrictly to be follow'd, at we ſhould be bound to faſt at the time he faſted, how doth it ap-ear that we are bound to faſt as many days as he faſted? The time ow long we faſt is as much a circumſtance, and in it ſelf as indifferent, s the time when we faſt. One of theſe circumſtances, the time when e faſt, may be diſpens'd with; how then doth it appear that the other, he duration of our Faſts, is of indiſpenſible obligation.

True it is, that we are in Scripture commanded to imitate Chriſt; nd that his life is propos'd to us as a pattern, which we ought in our ives to tranſcribe: but then all the works, all the actions of Chriſt are ot, without diſcrimination, to be imitated by us. Many things were o peculiar to the perſon of our bleſſed Saviour, that an attempt to imi-ate him in them is ſo far from being a commendable duty, that it would e an unpardonable preſumption in us. Our Saviour hath commanded s to learn of him; but then he hath told us what thoſe leſſons are, hich we are to learn of him; which are always ſuch, as fall within ur ſtrength and capacities. We are taught by the Apoſtles, to *be fol-owers of* them, *even as* they *alſo* were *of Chriſt*: but the Apoſtles them-elves did not, could not, in all things follow Chriſt; much leſs can we, ho come ſo much after, and ſo much behind them. We are as much ommanded to *be followers of God*, as we are to be followers of Chriſt; ut this command is never ſtretch'd ſo far, as that it ſhould be pretend-d that all the works of God are propos'd to us as patterns, which we ught to imitate. Chriſt's actions are of ſeveral kinds and natures, and o imitate them all is neither needful, poſſible, or warrantable. Some f Chriſt's actions were wrought by a divine power, and theſe we cannot; ſome were done by him, as our Mediator extraordinarily commiſ-ion'd by God, and theſe we ought not; ſome were accidental, occa-ional, or circumſtantial, and theſe we need not imitate. It is plain herefore, that, in the Goſpel, all things which Christ did, are not propoſ'd to our imitation; but only ſuch as are ſuited to our faculties, and are accommodated to our ſeveral vocations: but thoſe things which Chriſt did either as God, or as Mediator between God and man, are rather to be ador'd by us, than to be imitated; for to imitate ſuch actions as are above our ſtrength, and beyond our ſphere, is not an act of religion, or of devotion, but of raſhneſs and arrogance.

Now the Faſt of Chriſt taken with all its circumſtances ſeems to be an action of that nature, as that it ought to be rank'd amongſt thoſe miracles, which he wrought by a divine power, and thoſe offices which he diſcharg'd as our Saviour and Mediator. That he faſted forty days and forty nights, is, and muſt be own'd to be, a miracle exceeding the power of mere human nature; and ſuch a Faſt therefore as his was, is not, cannot be obligatory, becauſe in the nature of the thing impoſſible. But it is farther probable, that the Faſt of Chriſt was intended as a proof of his being the *Meſſias*, and was therefore perform'd by him as one part of his mediatorial office. As heretofore *Moſes*, when he gave the law; as *Elias*, when he was to reform God's worſhip, after it had been corrupted by Idolaters, before they entred upon their ſeveral offices were conſecrated and inaugurated thereto by a Faſt of forty days: ſo Chriſt our Lord, before he entred upon that office, which God the Father ſent him into the world to diſcharge, was pleas'd preſently after his baptiſm to be initiated thereunto by a like miracle. Since therefore the Faſt of Chriſt for forty days was a miraculous work, in which we cannot imitate him; ſince it ſeems to have been made uſe of by Chriſt as a proof of his miſſion, for which purpoſe we Chriſtians may not uſe it; ſince the like Faſts were before obſerv'd by *Moſes* and *Elias*, without laying any obligation upon the *Jews* to imitate them; it ſhould ſeem that the example of Chriſt is not a ſufficient foundation, whereon to build the neceſſity of a quadrageſimal Faſt. Were it only argu'd, that becauſe Chriſt faſted, we ought therefore to faſt, ſuch an inference might be allow'd; but when it is argu'd that becauſe Chriſt faſted forty days; we ought yearly to keep forty days of abſtinence, the concluſion ſeems to be of too great extent to be drawn from the premiſes. Some things that Chriſt did were in themſelves indifferent; and did not by his doing them become obligatory: did we know the habit which Chriſt wore, the diet which he us'd, the poſture in which he pray'd, the portion of time he cuſtomarily ſpent in prayer, we ſhould not think our ſelves oblig'd to imitate him in all theſe minute circumſtances.

Were Faſting confeſſedly a moral duty, which hath been controverted; were it an eſſential part of Religion, and not only an help to devotion; yet no one will ſay, that to faſt, or rather to be ſparing in our diet, for forty days preciſely, neither more nor leſs, is in its own nature neceſſary to the promotion of piety. This therefore being a circumſtance in it ſelf indifferent, it muſt be acknowledg'd that our Saviour's Faſt of forty days doth not indiſpenſibly oblige all Chriſtians in all ages of the Church to keep a Faſt of that duration, and at ſtated times of the year to repeat that Faſt, thro' the whole courſe of their pilgrimage in this world. If this had been our Saviour's intention, it had undoubtedly been plainly declar'd to us either by himſelf, or by his Apoſtles. We are in holy Writ often call'd upon to imitate the love, the holineſs, the humility, the patience of Chriſt; but to imitate him in this his faſting we are never invited. And yet had this Faſt been propos'd to our imitation, it ſhould ſeem more neceſſary that we ſhould have

n inſtructed thereof, than that we ſhould be told, that we ought to
meek and lowly, becauſe Chriſt was ſo: for that meekneſs and low-
eſs are Chriſtian duties, we are elſe-where taught, as well as by the
ample of Chriſt; but it is not ſo evident, that it is our duty to faſt
the ſame portion of time yearly, as our Saviour did once in his life,
m any expreſs precepts of the Goſpel: ſo that if we are oblig'd to it
the example of Chriſt, it ſhould ſeem neceſſary, that ſome where or
er it ſhould have been intimated to us, that we are thereby ſo ob-
d.

But tho' from what has been ſaid it appears probable, if not cer-
n, that Chriſt's faſting in the wilderneſs for forty days, and forty
hts, was not intended as an example obliging us to obſerve ſtated Faſts
the ſame duration; yet it will by no means follow from any thing,
ich hath been now offer'd, nor would I be ſo underſtood, as if I
ould inſinuate, that this Faſt of Chriſt was in no regard propos'd to us
our imitation. For tho' we may not be bound to imitate it exactly,
t it may become us to have an eye to it; tho' the preciſe number of
ys for which Chriſt faſted may not be of ſtrict obligation; yet it may
our duty in other reſpects to pay ſome regard to this his example.
e in entring upon our Chriſtian vocation ought ſo to behave our ſelves,
Chriſt did in entring upon his mediatorial office: He retreated from
e world, and by that retreat he virtually declar'd, that he had nothing
do with the world. Thoſe therefore who are call'd to the preaching
the Goſpel, or to any other the like duty, are by this example taught
wean themſelves from the things of this world, and to renounce what-
er may hinder them from the performance of that duty, to which
ey are call'd. Chriſt willingly follows, whither the Spirit leads him;
d what his Father commands him, that he undertakes with all ala-
rity: we in the like manner ought cheerfully in all things to comply
ith God's will and pleaſure; nothing ought to deter us from a ſteady
erformance of our duty; nor hunger, nor thirſt, nor deſerts, nor de-
ils ought to be terrible to us, whilſt we are ſafe under the conduct of
hriſt, and his Spirit. Chriſt ſoon after he was baptiz'd, *was led into
e wilderneſs to be tempted*: after we have liſted our ſelves amongſt
hriſt's ſoldiers, we muſt not expect to be idle, but muſt prepare our
lves for battle. Chriſt arm'd himſelf againſt the aſſaults of the devil
Faſting; this armour he himſelf did not want; but he therefore put
on, that we might learn how to arm our ſelves againſt our ſpiritual
nemies.

We cannot faſt ſo long as Chriſt did, we are not to faſt for thoſe pur-
oſes that Chriſt did; but tho' the example of Chriſt is not ſo obligatory
pon our conſciences, as that we are bound, under penalty of incurring
od's diſpleaſure, to imitate it in all its circumſtances, yet we may be
nſtructed by it, we may in ſome meaſure follow it. We are not ſo
rictly bound by this example, that if we ſhould not obſerve Faſts of
qual duration with that of Chriſt, at ſtated times of the year, we ſhould
guilty of the neglect of a neceſſary Chriſtian duty: but if ſuch ſtated
aſts can be otherwiſe prov'd either neceſſary, or uſeful, the correſpon-
ence of them with the Faſt of Chriſt, as to their continuance for ſuch
definite number of days, will not render them ſuperſtitious or ſinful.
hriſt's Faſt is no ſufficient ground, on which to found the neceſſity of
quadrageſimal Faſt; but if devout perſons ſhall voluntarily deny them-
elves any of thoſe pleaſures at ſome ſtated times, which at other times

they are not debarr'd from; ſuch an abſtinence employ'd to good and religious purpoſes, not undertaken out of an affectation of riſing up herein to our Saviour's pattern, which is by us inimitable; not inſiſted upon as a thing abſolutely good, and peremptorily commanded; not impos'd upon others, or practis'd by our ſelves, under the notion of a eſſential vital part of Chriſtian worſhip; not reſted in as for its own ſake valuable, but made uſe of in ſubſervience to the promoting other important and ſubſtantial duties, doth not, by that ſimilitude, which it may ſeem to bear to Chriſt's Faſt, become ſuperſtitious or unlawful.

I WOULD not therefore be ſo miſinterpreted, as if by any thing I have now offer'd, I had ſuggeſted, that becauſe Chriſt faſted forty days in the wilderneſs, we may not each year ſpend as many days in holy abſtinence. All that I have endeavour'd to prove, all that I think can be prov'd, from the great difference there is, and neceſſarily muſt be, betwixt this one Faſt of Chriſt, and the repeated Faſts of Chriſtians, is this, that the neceſſity of the latter cannot be inferr'd from the example of the former. Such Faſts may be our duty, tho' Chriſt ſo long faſted; but they are not therefore our duty, becauſe Chriſt ſo long faſted: the Faſt of Chriſt is no good argument to prove them neceſſary; but it is ſtill a worſe argument to prove them criminal. Thoſe who teach, that we ought in conſcience to obſerve ſuch Faſts, muſt bring better proofs of their aſſertion, than the example of Chriſt: and thoſe who teach, that we ought not to obſerve ſuch Faſts, muſt bring ſtronger proofs, than the ſame example of Chriſt, for their negation. He that from Chriſt's praying thrice in the garden, that the cup might paſs away from him, ſhould argue, that whenever we deprecate God's judgments, we muſt thrice repeat our prayers, and muſt chuſe a garden for our Oratory, would make a very wild inference; but he would ſtill make more extravagant one, who ſhould from thence infer, that it was unlawful for us ever to pray for the ſame thing thrice, or to ſay our prayers in a garden. As far therefore as I am able to judge, this example of our Saviour doth neither make for, nor againſt repeated anniverſary Faſts: at leaſt it doth not ſo far make for them, as to prove them indiſpenſibly neceſſary; or ſo far againſt them, as to prove them utterly unwarrantable.

OTHERS therefore who have thought the Lent-Faſt to be of more than human inſtitution, have choſe rather to found it on the precept, than on the example of Chriſt: and ſo far certainly they are in the right, that the command of Chriſt, if ſuch an one can be produc'd, is a firmer foundation to build any Chriſtian duty upon, than barely his example. The only enquiry therefore here is, whether our Saviour gave any ſuch command; and if he did, where we ſhall find it recorded? Some of the Fathers, who obſerv'd this Faſt, frankly own'd that they found no expreſs command for it in the writings of the Apoſtles; but others thought they had ſufficient authority in the written Word of God for it. And the authority moſt inſiſted on to this purpoſe is that ſaying of our Saviour, which we read, *Luke* 5. v. 35. *But the days will come, when the bridegroom ſhall be taken from them, and then ſhall they faſt in thoſe days.* This was part of the reply made by our Saviour to a captious queſtion, put to him by the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*. The queſtion was v. 33. this, *Why do the diſciples of John faſt often, and make prayers, and likewiſe the diſciples of the Phariſees; but thine eat and drink?* In anſwer

ver to this, our Saviour doth not urge the uſeleſsneſs of faſting, but
e unſeaſonableneſs of it; he doth not plead, that his diſciples were
xempted from this duty, but that as yet there was not a fit occaſion
r it; and he at the ſame time both gives a good reaſon for their pre-
nt omiſſion of it, and an aſſurance, that hereafter they would obſerve
: *And he ſaid unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-
hamber faſt, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will
me when the bridegroom ſhall be taken away from them, and then
all they faſt in thoſe days.* Now 'tis hence argued, that the Faſts ob-
rv'd by the *Phariſees* and the diſciples of *John* were periodical Faſts;
at the enquiry therefore was concerning the non-obſervance of ſuch
curring Faſts: that the anſwer given by our Saviour muſt be appo-
e to the queſtion, which was put to him; that therefore he here aſ-
gns a reaſon, why his diſciples did not at that time obſerve ſuch Faſts,
wit, his preſence with them; that he fixes a time, when this reaſon
ould ceaſe, and when they ſhould obſerve ſuch Faſts; that the time
x'd for their obſervance of ſuch Faſts is thoſe days, when he ſhould be
ken away from them; that he was then to be taken away from them,
hen he ſhould be crucified, ſhould die, and be buried; that therefore
e days of his crucifixion, and ſepulture, are here made by our Saviour
x'd days of anniverſary faſting.

Now allowing this reaſoning to be juſt, and that in this long chain
f deductions there is no one link but what will hold, which perhaps
an over-liberal allowance; yet the utmoſt, that can poſſibly be inferr'd
om this ſaying of our Saviour, thus underſtood, is, that we ought to
ep an anniverſary Faſt on the days of Chriſt's death and burial; but
will by no means from hence follow, that we are under any obliga-
ion from hence to keep what we now call a Lent-Faſt. But what our
aviour here declares concerning the future faſtings of his diſciples, may
oſſibly be a prediction of what they would do, not an injunction of
hat he peremptorily requir'd they ſhould do. The Faſts they might
bſerve after Chriſt's death, might be frequent, and yet not ſtated; or
hey might be ſtated, and yet not anniverſary; or they might be anni-
erſary in the Apoſtles time, and yet not in ſucceeding ages. *The days
hen the bridegroom ſhall be taken away from them,* may be under-
ood as properly of the days after his aſcenſion, when he was ſo taken
way from them, as not to return to them, as of the days of his paſſion
nd burial, when, tho' he was for a ſhort time to be taken from them,
e was to riſe again, and again to converſe with them. They might
aſt in thoſe days, when he ſhould be taken from them, out of a diſ-
onſolate ſorrow for the loſs of him, and not out of a religious princi-
le, in commemoration of his dying for them: ſo that what our Sa-
iour here pronounces concerning his diſciples faſting, muſt be very
much ſtrain'd to make it a ſufficient proof of our obligation to any ſtated
Faſts; much more to make it a convincing proof of anniverſary Faſts
o be kept by his Apoſtles; and yet ſtill more, to make it a ſatisfacto-
y proof of Chriſtians being oblig'd to obſerve an annual Faſt of forty
days before the feaſt of Chriſt's reſurrection, thro' all ages of the Church,
ill he ſhall come again.

Others therefore finding no expreſs precept in the Goſpel for the
obſervance of ſuch a Faſt; and thinking the example of our Saviour's
faſting in the wilderneſs too weak a foundation to build ſuch a Faſt up-
on, have choſe rather to derive it from the Apoſtles; and tho' they don't

find by their Writings, that either ſuch a Faſt was enjoyn'd by them, or ſo much as practis'd, yet are of opinion, that they have authority enough from Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory to conclude, that it muſt neceſſarily be of Apoſtolical Inſtitution. For ſince it is agreed on all hands, as well by thoſe who oppoſe, as by thoſe who preſs, the obſervance of ſuch a Faſt, that ſuch a Faſt was kept throughout the *Catholick* Church before the end of the fourth century; ſince the Council of *Nice*, which conſiſted of Biſhops gather'd together from all Churches of the world, and which met in the beginning of the fourth Century, makes mention of this Faſt, as then known and celebrated by the univerſal Church; ſince the epithet which they gave to the Faſt by them mention'd, doth according to the literal ſenſe of it, and to the uſage of thoſe times, ſignifie the ſpace of forty days; ſince *Conſtantine* the firſt Chriſtian Emperor mentions an annual Faſt kept before Eaſter, as a thing univerſally known and obſerv'd in that age; ſince we are taught by Writers who liv'd in the third Century, that the *Catholick* Church did in that age keep a Faſt on thoſe days in which the Bridegroom was taken away, and on ſome other days beſides, and before thoſe; ſince it appears from the diſputes about the time of keeping the Feaſt of Eaſter, which were manag'd with ſo much warmth towards the end of the ſecond Century, that ſome days, more or fewer, before that Feaſt, were in thoſe days ſpent in Faſting; ſince an eminent and judicious Writer of that age takes notice of different ways of keeping the Ante-paſchal Faſt, mentions the forty-days-Faſt, as one method obſerv'd by ſome Churches, and prefers that way of keeping it to others; ſince he ſaith that the Ante-paſchal Faſt was kept long before his own time, which ſeems to carry the uſage backwards to the very time of the Apoſtles; ſince moſt of the Fathers of the fourth and fifth Century do ſpeak of the quadrageſimal Faſt ſometimes as of Divine, ſometimes as of Apoſtolical Inſtitution, and as neceſſary to be by all obſerv'd; for theſe reaſons ſome learned men of our own Communion have not doubted, but the forty-days-Faſt before Eaſter hath been obſerv'd in the Church from the very times of the Apoſtles, and that the obſervance of it hath been owing to ſome tradition from them.

THIS opinion hath been embrac'd by perſons of great learning, piety, and skill in the Hiſtory of the Church; by men no ways addicted to *Popery*, or to the errors of it, and who cannot be thought to have entertain'd this opinion upon any other grounds, than becauſe upon a careful and ſtrict examination into the matter, they were in their judgments and conſciences thoroughly perſwaded of it. To this judgment their practice hath been conformable; and they have kept this Faſt with the ſame religious obſervance, as they have learn'd and repreſented it to have been kept by the ancient Fathers of the Church. The more converſant perſons have been in the writings of the Fathers, and the greater veneration they have had for antiquity, the more readily they have gone into this opinion; and if they have not brought ſuch arguments and authorities for it, as to make it unqueſtionable, and to guard it againſt all exceptions, yet it muſt be acknowledg'd, that they have brought ſuch good vouchers for it, as to make it at leaſt highly probable.

BUT however, ſince unwritten traditions are liable to many miſtakes in the conveyance of them; ſince the witneſſes of this tradition in thoſe ages, which were neareſt to the Apoſtles, are very few, do not all of them ſpeak home to the point, and do not exactly agree in their teſtimonies;

ce it is acknowledg'd, that the Faſt before Eaſter was by different
urches kept in a different manner; and ſince the length of theſe Faſts
s not always, or in all places the ſame; ſince it is difficult to account
this variety, if the ſame rules were given by the Apoſtles to all; ſince
muſt acknowledge, that ſome cuſtoms obtain'd in the Church after
age of the Apoſtles, whoſe firſt beginning we cannot trace, ſo that
obſervance of this Faſt may have been introduc'd later, tho' we are
able to aſſign the preciſe time of its introduction; ſince the farther
go back towards the Apoſtolical age, the more obſcure footſteps we
of this uſage; ſince we cannot conceive, but that if the Apoſtles
intended ſuch a Faſt ſhould be of perpetual and unalterable obliga-
n, in all ages of the Church, they would have enjoyn'd it, recom-
nded it, or at leaſt mention'd it, in thoſe Writings which they, by
guidance of God's Holy Spirit, penn'd for the uſe of the Church in
ages; for theſe reaſons, and for others that might be aſſign'd, we may,
think, with all due deference to thoſe very learned and very pious
en, who have eſpous'd this opinion, doubt of the truth and certain-
of it, and at leaſt ſo far ſuſpend our judgment, as not to be firmly
thoroughly perſwaded, that this Faſt is of Apoſtolical Inſtitution.

But then at the ſame time the arguments brought to prove it Apoſto-
al, tho' they ſhould not be own'd to be ſufficient to that purpoſe, muſt,
think, be by all acknowledg'd plain, and ſtrong, and full enough, to
ove it very ancient. The obſervance of this Faſt, tho' it is not per-
ps quite ſo old as the Chriſtian Religion, is much older than *Popery*;
'it can't make out its origine from Chriſt, yet we are ſure that it is
invention of Anti-Chriſt: tho' therefore it ought not to be impos'd as
eſſential part, and indiſpenſible duty of the Goſpel, it cannot juſtly
oppos'd as *Popiſh* and *Anti-Chriſtian*.

Very many, and very groſs are the abuſes, wherewith *Popery* hath
orrupted this religious Obſervance; but thoſe abuſes may be ſeparated
om it, and the uſe of ſuch a Faſt may be innocent and commendable.
affirm, that by the obſervance of this Faſt we may merit God's bleſ-
gs, temporal and eternal; that it is ſatisfactory for our ſins; that all the
thful are oblig'd in conſcience directly, and under the pain of damna-
n to obſerve it; and that the neglect of it is of it ſelf, tho' no ſcan-
l is thereby given, nor no contempt of authority intended, a mortal
; to teach, that one man may faſt for another, and transfer to that
her the merit of his faſting; that there is no neceſſity that prayers,
ms, hearing God's Word, or other religious exerciſes ſhould accompa-
our Faſts, but that they are of themſelves acts of Religion; to make
aſting conſiſt, not in a total abſtinence from meat, but in a forbearance
ſuch and ſuch particular kinds of meat; to diſtinguiſh betwixt a moral
d eccleſiaſtical Faſt, and to maintain, that tho' intemperance is excluded
the former, it is not at all inconſiſtent with the latter; and that
erefore he who on a Faſt-day eats to exceſs, doth not break that Faſt,
hilſt he eats only ſuch meats as are by the Church allow'd; to give it
good caſuiſtical Divinity, that a Faſt is not broken by the quantity
what we eat or drink, but only by the quality; that we may drink
exceſs without breach of the Faſt; that it is a greater ſin to eat the
aſt morſel of fleſh, than to eat fiſh even to gluttony; to make the de-
inition of a Faſt to be the eating of one meal a day, and to allow the
aking of this meal at noon, or the dividing it into ſeveral portions, which
ay be taken at ſeveral hours of the day; to forbid ſuppers, and to allow

the ſame thing under the name of collations; to change the notion of Faſting, ſo that it ſhall have nothing but the empty name of a Faſt without the reality, and at the ſame time to enhance the value of it ſo high as to make it meritorious; to lay down ſuch principles as theſe, concerning either Faſts in general, or the Lent-Faſt in particular, or to act by ſuch principles, is indeed *Popiſh* and ſuperſtitious, contrary to the rules of right reaſon, and ſound Religion, ridiculous in the eſteem of wiſe men, and abominable in the ſight of God.

But now on the other ſide, when godly and well-diſpos'd perſons obſerve ſuch days of abſtinence in a right manner, and to a right end; whe they look upon Faſting, not as an eſſential part of natural or reveal'd Religion, but only as an auxiliary or inſtrumental duty; when they do not reſt in it as abſolutely and in it ſelf good, but make uſe of it as a proper help for the better performance of thoſe duties, which are ſtrictly and properly acts of religious worſhip; when they do not acquieſce in the bare outward performance of this duty, or think they have diſcharg'd it as they ought, till by the uſe of theſe means, and God's bleſſing upon them, they have attain'd thoſe graces, to which theſe means ought to be ſubſervient; when they ſtrive thereby to mortifie the fleſh and to ſubdue the luſts thereof; to ſpiritualize the ſoul, and to diſpoſe it for more exalted acts of devotion; when to theſe ends they chuſe to ſet apart thoſe days, which they find have been ſet apart to the ſame ends by the generality of Chriſtians in all ages; when they are willing to keep up a cuſtom, which they find hath been kept up by all, or by moſt of the Churches of God; when they dutifully comply with the uſages of that Church in which they live, and are afraid of deſpiſing the lawful commands of their ſuperiours; when, how ſtrict ſoever they are towards themſelves, they are not rigorous in their cenſures of others who do not think themſelves bound to the ſame obſervances; when they do not hope by abſtinence at ſome times of the year, to compound for criminal exceſſes at other times, but are temperate and ſober thro' the whole courſe of their lives, and at ſome ſtated periods ſequeſter themſelves more than uſually from the buſineſs, and from the pleaſures of this world, that they may more freely and uninterruptedly attend to the concerns of the next; when they are in their conſciences fully perſwaded that one day, or one meat of it ſelf is not more holy, more pure, or more clean than another, but that all days, and all meats be of their own nature of one equal purity, cleanneſs and holineſs, and yet on ſome days abſtain from ſome meats not as in themſelves unlawful, but as le ſubſervient to the keeping under the body, and bringing it into ſubjection; when they do not rigorouſly tie themſelves up to fixt and unchangeable rules, from which they may in no caſe ſwerve, to the enſnaring and perplexing of their conſciences, but in things of themſelves indifferent uſe ſuch a latitude, as may neither entrench too much on Chriſtian liberty, nor on the other ſide open a gap to licentiouſneſs; when I ſay, ſober, judicious, and devout Chriſtians obſerve the Faſts of the Church with theſe cautions, reſtrictions, and limitations, ſuch an obſervance cannot be juſtly accus'd of ſuperſtition, cannot indeed be condemn'd without ſuperſtition. Such an abſtinence as this our Church recommends; ſuch if we ſhall practiſe with the ſame intentions, with the ſame piety and moderation, as ſhe recommends it, we ſhall thereby reap great benefit to our ſouls, and the better prepare and diſpoſe them for the reception of God's grace here, and the communication of his glory in the world to come.

SERMON XI.

f Obedience to our ſpiritual Guides and Governours.

HEBR. XIII. 17.

bey them that have the rule over you, and ſubmit your ſelves; for they watch for your ſouls, as they that muſt give account.

IN ſome former diſcourſes I endeavour'd to juſtifie our Church in impoſing and uſing thoſe Rites and Ceremonies, which are by her enjoyn'd and us'd in the worſhip of God. Theſe I attempted to prove innocent and lawful, decent and comely, uſeful and edifying; ſuch as the Governours of our Church had authority to mpoſe, and ſuch as all the peaceable Sons of it were in conſcience bound comply with. The ſame perſons, who object againſt our Ceremonies, do alſo object againſt the Government of our Church. They complain, that there is not that parity, which there ought to be, amongſt he Paſtors of the Church; that ſome take upon them an authority, which they have no good title to; and that others are not permitted o exerciſe that authority, to which they have a good title, by the charter which Chriſt hath given to his Church; that thoſe who are no more han Shepherds, pretend to be *Lords over God's heritage*, and to exerciſe 1 Pet. 5. 3. ominion not only over the flock, but over thoſe who are Shepherds f it equally with them: that this preeminence of ſome Paſtors over thers, of Biſhops, as they are pleas'd to call themſelves, over Presbyters, is a relique of Popery fit to be aboliſh'd, in order to a perfect and horough Reformation of the Church.

BUT as zealous as ſuch Anti-Epiſcopal perſons may pretend to be gainſt Popery, ſure we are, that theſe objections againſt Epiſcopacy are put into their mouths by Papiſts. It hath been their endeavour to depreſs the juſt rights of Epiſcopacy, in order to advance the unjuſt pretences of Papacy: all other Biſhops have by them been with great induſtry degraded, that the one Biſhop of *Rome* might be the higher ex-toll'd. When therefore we plead the cauſe of Epiſcopacy againſt Fanaticiſm, we do virtually plead the cauſe of the Reformation againſt Popery. All thoſe arguments that are brought againſt Biſhops being a ſuperiour order to Presbyters, were firſt forg'd by the ſticklers for the Papal ſupremacy; for they were well aware, that in order to prove the divine right of Papacy, it was firſt neceſſary to overthrow the divine right of Epiſcopacy. When therefore the enemies of our Church, out of a miſtaken or pretended zeal againſt Popery, do attempt any thing againſt the order of Biſhops, they do the greateſt ſervice poſſible to that cauſe, which they would ſeem moſt to diſſerve.

Having before endeavour'd to defend the uſages of our Church from the imputation of *will-worſhip* or ſuperſtition, I ſhall now endeavour to defend its Government from the imputation of tyranny, or uſurpation. Now, that we may, according to the precept here given us, pay all obedience and ſubmiſſion to thoſe, *who have the rule over us*, and who *watch for* our *ſouls*; that we may know who thoſe are, who, according to the doctrine and inſtitutions of the Apoſtles, *have the rule over us*; that we may be convinc'd, that this power of ruling doth not belong to all Paſtors of the Church in common, but that ſome have, and ought to have, a ſuperiority, over the reſt, I ſhall beg leave to trace this authority from Chriſt and his Apoſtles.

As our Lord did not immediately ordain his Apoſtles, aſſoon as he entred upon his miniſtry, but ſome time after; as he did not elect the ſeventy diſciples at the ſame time when he choſe the twelve Apoſtles, but at ſome diſtance of time afterwards, when he had occaſion for them: ſo his Apoſtles, treading in the ſteps of their Maſter, did not immediately, aſſoon as power was given them by Chriſt, order all things that were neceſſary for the perpetual adminiſtration of the Church, but proceeded leiſurely and by degrees, according to the occaſions and exigences of the Church; yet ſo, that before they departed out of this world, they ſettled all things which were neceſſary to the external form and polity of the Chriſtian Church. Whilſt Chriſt was here upon earth, the Apoſtles had no other power than that of baptizing, and preaching the Goſpel, and were not yet Biſhops, but Presbyters ſubject to Chriſt, the *Biſhop of our* 1 Pet. 2. 25. *ſouls*: but after the reſurrection of Chriſt, they were promoted to the order of Biſhops, and ſucceeded their Lord in the adminiſtration and government of the Church. We have the time and the manner of their conſecration to this office recorded by St. *John*, c. 20. where we read, that our Saviour appearing to the Apoſtles, after his reſurrection, ſaid unto them, when gather'd together in one body, *Peace be unto you: as my Father hath ſent me, even ſo ſend I you.* As Chriſt therefore was ſent by the Father, ſo the Apoſtles were ſent by Chriſt; as he receiv'd from the Father the power of ſending them, ſo they receiv'd from him the power of ſending others, who might ſucceed them, as they had ſucceeded Chriſt; ſo that what Chriſt upon his aſcent into heaven had promis'd, might hereby be fulfill'd, *Behold I am with you even unto the end of the world*: which could not be, unleſs the Apoſtles continu'd in the Church either in their own perſons, or in their ſucceſſors, who came into their places. That therefore they might provide for a perpetual ſucceſſion, the ſame Spirit which Chriſt confer'd upon them, they confer'd upon others, tho' not in the ſame manner, and with the ſame ceremony. Chriſt convey'd his Spirit to them by breathing upon them, which is a Rite peculiar to him, from whom the Spirit proceeds: the Apoſtles

tranſmitting to others that Spirit wherewith they were fill'd, made
of an ancient Rite, inſtituted by God in the *Moſaick* Law, and con-
ntly obſerv'd in the *Jewiſh* Church, to wit, the impoſition of hands.
ter this manner the Spirit was by *Moſes* pour'd out upon *Joſhua*; and
er this ſame manner that Spirit, which was breath'd upon the Apo-
s, was by the Apoſtles conſign'd to their immediate Succeſſors, by
m to be deriv'd down to others ſucceſſively, to the end of the world.

WHEN the Apoſtles had this power of governing the Church, and
ordaining Succeſſors, intruſted with them by Chriſt, it cannot be
bted, but they did faithfully diſcharge this weighty truſt. No one
queſtion, but when the Apoſtles had with God's aſſiſtance converted
number of men in any place to the Chriſtian Faith, they did there
nd a Church; and before they finally left it, they did furniſh it with
that power, which they had themſelves receiv'd of Chriſt, in order
convey it to others; and conſequently did empower ſome perſons
other to ordain Succeſſors in the miniſtry of the Church, with whom
riſt, according to his promiſe, might be preſent to the end of the
rld. The only queſtion is, whether the Apoſtles, before they de-
rted out of this life, did commit this power of governing the Church,
of ordaining others, to one certain perſon in every Church, or to
eral jointly, to wit, according to the modern way of ſpeaking, whe-
r to a Biſhop, or to a claſſis of Presbyters. For thus muſt we ſtate
queſtion concerning the authority of Biſhops over Presbyters, if we
uld come to a fair determination of it. For to contend about the
es of Biſhops and Presbyters, is only to raiſe a duſt, and to manage
iſpute ſo, as that there will be no end of diſputing. Nor can this
troverſy be determin'd by thoſe things, which the Apoſtles are ſaid
have done in the beginning of their miniſtry, immediately after the
cenſion of Chriſt; For there was no need that they ſhould appoint ſuc-
ſſors, before they themſelves were about to depart. And beſides, few
thoſe things, which the Apoſtles did in propagating the Goſpel, and
forming of Churches, are recorded in the writings of the Apoſtles.
ly St. *Luke* hath wrote the Acts of the Apoſtles; and even he hath re-
ded nothing of St. *Peter*, but what happned either the very year that
riſt aſcended, or the next year after: of St. *Paul*, who was by Chriſt
nſelf call'd to the Apoſtleſhip, he hath ſaid indeed more, but ſtill only
h things, of which he himſelf was an eye-witneſs; of the other A-
ſtles he hath ſaid very little. The Epiſtles of St. *Paul* and others, being
rote occaſionally, do rather ſuppoſe the form of Church government
be known, than explain it. Many of the Apoſtles liv'd after all the
oks of the New Teſtament were written; and the Church being in that
me very much enlarg'd, there is no doubt but they reduc'd it to a more
act form of Government, than it was capable of in its infancy. From
which conſiderations it is plain, that the queſtion concerning that
rm of Government, which was inſtituted by the Apoſtles, and which
s to be obſerv'd in future ages, ought ſo to be put, as that the enqui-
may not be, what the Apoſtles did, or are ſaid to have done, in the
ſt founding and propagating the Church, but how they determin'd it
ould be govern'd, when eſtabliſh'd and ſpread throughout the world?
hether they before they left this world, convey'd their Apoſtolical au-
ority to one ſingle Governour in each particular Church, or to many
ting jointly? And the queſtion thus fairly ſtated, if it be as fairly ex-
min'd, may with great eaſe and great certainty be determin'd. For

that the Apoſtles did transfer that ſovereign power, wherewith they were inveſted, of governing the Church and of ordaining Eccleſiaſtical Officers, not to many jointly, but to one ſingle perſon in each City o Church, we have very many and very good reaſons to be fully aſſur'd of For firſt, it is not to be doubted, but that the Apoſtles did communicate this power to others, after the ſame manner, as near as was poſſible, that Chriſt had communicated it to them. Had Chriſt delegated his authority, not to the Apoſtles ſeverally, but to the college of them in conjunction, it had been neceſſary for them to have deriv'd it, not upo ſingle perſons, but upon the whole body of the Presbyters in eac Church: ſince they might have been certain, that it was the pleaſur of their Maſter, that this authority ſhould not be truſted with one individual perſon, but only with a number of Paſtors. But if on the contrar our Saviour did not commit this power to the whole Apoſtolical colleg but to each and every of the Apoſtles ſeverally, the Apoſtles followin his example could not but transfer that authority, which they had ſeverally receiv'd, to ſeveral perſons, who after them were to preſide ove the Church: ſo that as Chriſt alone had this authority reſiding in himſelf; as each of the Apoſtles had this authority deriv'd to him from Chriſt ſo one ſingle Biſhop in each ſeveral Church had the ſame ſole authority entruſted with him, and was in his place and ſtation the Subſtitut of Chriſt.

NOR can it be controverted, whether Chriſt did delegate this powe to the Apoſtles ſeverally, or to all of them acting in a body. If he gave it not to each ſingly, but to all jointly, they could tranſact nothing bu when they were together; and then to be ſure they would not, as w are ſure they did, ſeparate from one another in order to propagate the

2 Cor. 11.28. Goſpel. St. *Paul* ſaith of himſelf, that he had *the care of all the Churches* and tho' others had the care of them as well as he, yet in taking care of the he often acted without their advice and concurrence. Taking *notice* ſome diſorders in the Church of *Corinth*, he promiſes to rectifie the when he came, and therefore was not under any neceſſity of ſtaying ti all the Apoſtles met, in order to correct ſuch abuſes. In his Epiſtles he often gives general precepts concerning all manner of Eccleſiaſtical diſcipline, to which he expects obedience without appealing to any authorit but that which he had in his own ſingle perſon. From which it is manif that the Apoſtolical authority did reſt in each Apoſtle; and therefore w by Chriſt lodg'd with ſingle perſons, and in conformity with Chriſt's inſtitution, was by the Apoſtles to be deriv'd to ſingle perſons, their ſucceſſors And if this authority was by the Apoſtles committed to ſingle perſons in each Church, then, whether we will call thoſe perſons Biſhops, or Paſtors, or Preſidents, or by what other name we pleaſe, it is certain that they did preſide over others in the Church, and had authority ove them by Apoſtolical, or, which is all one, by Divine right; what the Apoſtles did, being done by Divine guidance and direction.

AND as the Apoſtles might, and ought, ſo in fact 'tis plain that they did delegate that power, which they had of governing the Church and of ordaining, to ſingle perſons. This authority St. *Paul* did comm to *Timothy*, who was ordain'd by him. The Apoſtle teaches him, how he was to behave himſelf in the exerciſe of that function; that he was to

1 Tim. 5. 22. *lay* his *hands ſuddenly on no man*; that *againſt an Elder he ſhould no*

v. 19. *receive an accuſation, but before two or three witneſſes*; that he ſhould

v. 21. *do nothing by partiality*. All which admonitions were in vain given by

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he Apoſtle to *Timothy*, unleſs he had receiv'd from him a power of or-
aining, of hearing accuſations brought againſt Presbyters, and of judg-
ng in Eccleſiaſtical cauſes. The ſame power *Titus* had delegated to him
n *Crete* by the ſame Apoſtle, as is evident from St. *Paul*'s Epiſtle to
im, wherein he tells him, that *for this cauſe he had left him in Crete,* Tit. 1. v. 5.
hat he ſhould ſet in order the things that were wanting, and ordain
Elders in every city, as he had appointed him. Where we find that *Ti-*
us a ſingle perſon did receive from St *Paul*, a ſingle Apoſtle, all that
ower, which was granted to the Apoſtles themſelves in the govern-
ent of the Church, to wit, the power of ſetting in order what things
ere defective in the Church, and of ordaining Presbyters in every city;
which two heads all Eccleſiaſtical authority may be reduc'd. Cer-
in it is therefore that this authority was by the Apoſtle tranſmitted
everally to two ſingle perſons, *Timothy* and *Titus*; but we never read
any of the Apoſtolical Writers, that St *Paul*, or any other Apoſtle,
id ever commit the ſame authority to any Body, or Aſſembly of men.
nd if *Timothy* in *Aſia*, and *Titus* in *Crete*, had this authority commit-
d to them ſeverally, we may fairly conclude, that the ſame authority
as by the Apoſtles in other Churches, committed to ſingle perſons eve-
where. For beſides that reaſon requir'd, that they ſhould give it,
they had receiv'd it, it can't be doubted, but that the Apoſtles mo-
ll'd all the Churches after the ſame manner. Uniformity was what
ey aim'd at, and to preſerve that, what they ordain'd in one, that they
dain'd in all the Churches. And therefore from St *Paul*'s conveyance
the Apoſtolical, or Epiſcopal authority to *Timothy* and *Titus*, ſingle
rſons, this concluſion ſeems fairly and rightly deduc'd, that it was
e will of the Apoſtles, and the command of Chriſt, that the power
f ordaining, and of adminiſtring the government of the Church, ſhould
reſide in one ſingle perſon in each City, or Church, who was thereby
made the Preſident, or Biſhop thereof.

AND this is ſtill farther evident from Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, to which it
neceſſary that we ſhould have recourſe in this matter. For ſince,
hath been obſerv'd, very few of thoſe things which the Apoſtles did,
recorded in holy Writ; and ſince many of thoſe things, which con-
rn the perpetual government of the Church, were order'd by the Apo-
les, not long before their departure out of the world; and ſince the
hole Canon of the new Teſtament was long before that compleated; if
e would have a full and diſtinct account, by what channel, and to what
rſons the Apoſtles delegated their authority, we muſt neceſſarily en-
uire into the hiſtory of thoſe Churches, which they founded, and left
others to govern. And if upon enquiry we diſcover, that no Church
unded by the Apoſtles was from their days govern'd any otherwiſe,
han by a ſingle perſon preſiding over other Presbyters, there will be
room to doubt, but the authority of governing Churches was by
e Apoſtles committed to ſingle perſons. For we can't conceive that
e Churches founded by the Apoſtles were otherwiſe govern'd by their
mmediate Succeſſors, than they themſelves had order'd, whilſt they
ere alive.

NOW, if we ſearch all Eccleſiaſtical antiquity, we ſhall never be able
find any Church founded by any Apoſtle, but what was govern'd by
ne ſingle perſon, who had ſuch preeminence and authority over all,
who were conſtituted and ordained in the ſame Church, that he alone
by name mention'd in Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, as one who was in his

own perſon inveſted with authority by that Apoſtle, who had founded that Church. As we are now able to produce the catalogue of thoſe ſeveral Biſhops, who have ſat in the ſeveral Sees of this kingdom from the Reformation; ſo the Eccleſiaſtical hiſtorians, who liv'd at ſome diſtance from the firſt beginnings of Chriſtianity, do very often give us catalogues of thoſe Biſhops, who had preſided in the ſeveral cities from the very times of the Apoſtles: which is a very plain and undeniable argument, that the Apoſtolical authority of governing the Church was not deriv'd to Bodies of men, but to ſingle perſons. That before the middle of the ſecond century, to wit, within forty years after the laſt of the Apoſtles, ſingle perſons did every where preſide over other Preſbyters, which ſingle perſons had the title and office of Biſhops; that theſe did each of them exerciſe authority over their reſpective Churches; that their powers were as great, as thoſe which we claim to belong to our Biſhops now, is ſo irrefragably prov'd from the beſt and moſt ancient monuments of the Church, that the moſt violent oppoſers of Epiſcopal authority have been forc'd to confeſs it. And if we had no other arguments to prove the Apoſtolical inſtitution of Epiſcopacy, yet to all unprejudic'd perſons this one conceſſion of its adverſaries is a ſufficient proof of ſuch an inſtitution. For that the firſt Succeſſors of the Apoſtles were wiſe and good men, no one who has any regard to the cauſe of Chriſtianity will deny: they knew what the Apoſtles had ordain'd concerning the government of the Church, and no good reaſon can be aſſign'd, why they ſhould innovate upon an Apoſtolical inſtitution. They were men of ſuch integrity, ſuch piety, ſuch love to Chriſt, that they never ſcrupled to ſeal the Goſpel preach'd to them with their blood; they brought forth the fruits of it in their holy lives, and they ratified its truth by their deaths. Now how was it conſiſtent with the known humility of theſe perſons to arrogate to themſelves more power over their brethren, than their Lord and Maſter had truſted them with? What could ſhew more impiety towards Chriſt, than boldly and ſacrilegiouſly to violate his ſacred inſtitution? What could be more injurious to their brethren, than to deprive them of their privileges, and to arrogate to themſelves alone that authority, which was common to others with them? How much ambition, how much pride, how much tyranny muſt poſſeſs the minds of thoſe, who would thus go about to *Lord it over God's heritage*. Theſe are the crimes, which the contenders for a parity among Eccleſiaſtical Governours are not aſham'd to impute to the immediate Diſciples, and Succeſſors of the Apoſtles, when they repreſent them as uſurping an undue authority and dominion over thoſe, who by Chriſt's inſtitution were their equals. But they ſhould not object ſuch crimes to them, unleſs they would have it believ'd, that they were not faithful Diſciples of Chriſt, but the moſt profligate of men. For if they were holy, if they were religious, if they were worthy of the name of Chriſtians, as we do verily believe, and our adverſaries cannot deny, they were, they could not be guilty of ſuch intolerable pride and inſolence.

And as they would not, if they could, ſo neither is it probable that they could, if they would, introduce into the univerſal Church another form of Government, than ſuch as was inſtituted by the Apoſtles. If indeed only one or two Churches had been govern'd by Biſhops, there would be room to ſuſpect that this might be an undue deviation from the Apoſtolical pattern. But we are ſure, that all the Churches founded

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the Apoſtles, tho' never ſo remote one from another, tho' they had
commerce one with another, tho' they were not at all ſo much as by
me known one to another; yet they did all agree in the ſame form of
ccleſiaſtical government: ſo that there is no one Church which we
ad of, but we can prove, that ſoon after the deceaſe of the Apoſtles it
s govern'd by a ſingle Biſhop; which could not, we think, have been
ought to paſs ſo ſoon, and ſo univerſally, unleſs all Churches had, toge-
er with the ſame faith, receiv'd alſo the ſame form of government from
Apoſtles. If the ſeveral Biſhops did challenge, and exerciſe, an autho-
y in their ſeveral Churches over their Presbyters, which was contrary
the command of Chriſt, and the inſtitution of the Apoſtles, how
mes it to paſs that no Presbyters did ever oppoſe them, nor object
them this violation of their Lord's command, and invaſion of their
ghts? If the Apoſtles did delegate an equal ſhare of authority to all
Presbyters in each Church jointly, how came theſe Presbyters quiet-
to ſuffer this authority to be forc'd away from them, and transferr'd
on the Biſhops? Why did not the Presbyters of that age, as well as
me of ours, pretend that they were equal to the Biſhops? Why were
t they as unwilling to ſubmit to a yoke, which the Biſhops had no
thority to impoſe upon them? Were not they who liv'd in the next
to the Apoſtles, as well acquainted with the practice of the Apo-
s, as we are at the diſtance of ſo many centuries? If therefore they
ew that the Apoſtles had order'd that every Church ſhould be go-
rn'd, not by a ſingle Biſhop, but by a Body of Presbyters, and if
s was true, they could not but know it, why would they permit
s Apoſtolical inſtitution to be violated? If any Biſhop pretended
dominion over the Presbyters who were his equals, was there no one
o had courage enough to tell ſuch an aſſuming perſon, that he arro-
ted too much to himſelf; that he could not but know, what every one
new, that the Lord and his Apoſtles, from whom they receiv'd their
ith, their doctrine, and their authority, had decreed that they ſhould
all equal, and that therefore no one could pretend to a power over
other, which that other might not as well pretend to over him? And
t it is certain matter of fact, that ſuch an authority was exerciſ'd with-
t any oppoſition; that ſuch a power was challeng'd by Biſhops, and
ver reſiſted by Presbyters; that from the age next after the Apoſtles
the age next before ours, there was never above one Presbyter taken
tice of in hiſtory, and he is branded for an Heretick on this account,
pretending to be equal to a Biſhop.

Now this ſeems not only very difficult, but even impoſſible to be
ccounted for, if the Apoſtles inſtituted that parity, which ſome now
ontend for; or if they did not inſtitute that Epiſcopal authority, by
hich all the Churches of Chriſt, in all ages from the Apoſtles time
own to the laſt age, have been govern'd. Being induc'd by theſe rea-
ns, and many others which might be aſſign'd, if there was leiſure
nough, or occaſion for ſaying more, we are throughly perſwaded, that
in the *Jewiſh* Church the high Prieſt was above the Prieſts and Le-
ites; as in the infancy of the Chriſtian Church Chriſt was above the
poſtles, and the ſeventy Diſciples; as whilſt the Apoſtles liv'd, they
ere above the other Eccleſiaſtical Officers: ſo ever after their death,
iſhops by Divine right have, and to the end of the world ought to have,
uthority over Prieſts and Deacons. For ſince the Apoſtles in propaga-
ing and eſtabliſhing the Church were divinely inſpir'd; ſince they did

nothing, but what they were taught to do by Chriſt; ſince Chriſt did nothing, but what he was taught by the Father; ſince he himſelf was God, and what was done by his, was done by Divine authority, it comes to the ſame thing, whether we aſſert Epiſcopacy to be of Divine right, or of Apoſtolical inſtitution.

To all that hath been pleaded, or that can be pleaded, in favour of Epiſcopacy, the Oppoſers of it have one, which they think a ſufficient objection. In determining the meaſures of authority, in judging of Ecclesiaſtical offices, whether they be equal with, or ſubordinate to one another, we muſt, ſay they, be directed, not by the opinions of Fathers, but by the Word of God; we muſt conſult, not Eccleſiaſtical, but inſpir'd hiſtory; we muſt enquire, not what form of Church government crept into the Church in the next age, but what obtain'd in the very age of the Apoſtles. Now there we find no ſuch diſtinction of Biſhops and Presbyters; both theſe names occur indeed in holy Writ, but both are apply'd to expreſs one and the ſame office. The ſame persons conven'd by St. *Paul* at *Miletus* under the name of Elders or Presbyters, are by him addreſs'd to as Over-ſeers or Biſhops. St. *Paul* commiſſions *Titus* to *ordain Elders in every city*; but when he comes to ſpecifie the qualifications requiſite in ſuch as were to be ordain'd, he tells them, that *a Biſhop muſt be blameleſs*. St. *Peter* calls himſelf *an Elder*, or Com-presbyter, and St. *John* in two of his Epiſtles aſſumes no higher a title than that of an *Elder*. Whatever changes therefore might obtain in after ages, they think it is plain, that in the firſt age, Elders and Over-ſeers, Presbyters and Biſhops, were not ſeveral offices, but only ſeveral words to expreſs the ſame office; that thoſe, who were call'd by the ſame common name, were inveſted with the ſame common powers.

Now allowing it to be true, that theſe names are in Scripture us'd promiſcuouſly, which yet is by very learned men, and upon very good authority denied; yet ſtill this is no proof that Presbyters muſt be advanc'd to the dignity of Biſhops, or Biſhops ſunk to the level of Presbyters. For altho' the term Presbyter is at preſent us'd to denote the office of thoſe who aſſiſt the Biſhop, and who are ſubject to him in diſcharging ſome of the miniſterial functions; yet in the days of the Apoſtles the Biſhops might be call'd Presbyters, tho' they had then other Presbyters ſubject to them. For altho' all Presbyters are not Biſhops; yet all Biſhops are Presbyters; altho' the former may not perform the function of the latter, the latter may perform the function of the former; what offices are incumbent on a Presbyter, thoſe a Biſhop hath a right to perform, and may therefore upon that account very *juſtly* be call'd a Presbyter. This confuſion of names is very obſervable in the *Jewiſh* Church; it is allow'd on all hands that under that diſpenſation there were three orders of Eccleſiaſtical perſons; the high Prieſt, the Prieſts, and the Levites. And yet in the firſt inſtitution of thoſe orders the word Prieſt is us'd promiſcuouſly, as well of the high Prieſt as of the inferiour Prieſts; ſo that *Aaron* himſelf, the firſt high Prieſt in the books of *Moſes*, is never dignified with any higher character than that of Prieſt. Levit. 1. 7, 8. As when it is ſaid, *The ſons of Aaron the Prieſt ſhall put fire upon the altar*, and then in the next verſe, *The Prieſts, Aaron's ſons, ſhall lay the parts.* In which words we have *Aaron* the high Prieſt, and his ſons the Prieſts, dignified with one and the ſame compellation. He is call'd the Prieſt, and they alſo the Prieſts. Nor do we any where in the books of *Moſes* find either *Aaron*, or *Eleazar* his

Son

Son, who ſucceeded him in the high Prieſthood, call'd by another name,
han that which was common to thoſe who were barely Prieſts. But after-
wards in proceſs of time, the diſtinction of names obtain'd to expreſs the
iſtinction of Offices; ſo that in the writings of the ſacred Hiſtorians
nd Prophets the high Prieſt is call'd the chief Prieſt, or greateſt of
Prieſts, and the inferiour Prieſts are ſtyled Prieſts at large. But who ever,
rom this promiſcuous uſe of the name, hath attempted to prove, that
ll the Prieſts were equal to the high Prieſt, or that the Sons of *Aaron*
ere of the ſame dignity, and order with *Aaron* their Father? Would
ot a man expoſe himſelf to contempt, who ſhould uſe ſuch a trifling
gument? Would he not be thought ſtill more abſurd, who ſhould lay
y great weight and ſtreſs upon ſuch an argument? Would not this
ſurdity riſe ſtill higher, if he ſhould build ſo much upon ſo weak a
ottom, as upon no better ground than this promiſcuous uſe of words
go about to overthrow an order, that hath been eſtabliſh'd in the
hurch from the very firſt inſtitution of it? Who is not abundantly ſa-
fied that the high Prieſt was ſuperiour to the other Prieſts, tho' he was
ll'd by the ſame name? And yet this is the main argument, which
contenders for a parity among Presbyters make uſe of, to prove
at they contend for, that in the writings of the Apoſtles Biſhops
ſometimes, according to the opinion of ſome interpreters, for nei-
er is this promiſcuous uſe of names a matter by all agreed upon, call'd
esbyters.

EITHER this argument proves nothing at all, or it proves a great
l too much; if it be a good proof of the equality of Miniſters under
Goſpel, it is as good a proof of the equality of Miniſters under the
w: if an identity of names proves an identity of offices, then all the
ieſts of the *Jewiſh* Church were equal to the high Prieſt, they were
of the ſame order, and had all the ſame authority, and could all
erciſe the ſame functions. For when the *Jewiſh* Church was found-
, it is plain from the writings of *Moſes* the Founder of that Church
der God, that they were all call'd by the ſame name. But then it is
plain, that the Prieſts were not equal to the high Prieſt, that their
thority was not the ſame, that they could not without uſurpation
tend to exerciſe the ſame functions, and therefore the identity of the
mes doth not prove an identity of offices. Thoſe who, from this pro-
ſcuous uſe of the names of Biſhop and Presbyter in the writings of
New Teſtament, argue for a parity of orders, had they liv'd in the
wiſh Church, might with as good reaſon have contended with the
gh Prieſt for his Pontificate, and in purſuance of theſe principles muſt
ve join'd with *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram* in the complaint they
ade againſt their ſuperiours: *Ye take too much upon you, ſeeing all the* Num. 16. 3.
ngregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them:
herefore then lift you up your ſelves above the congregation of the
rd?

FROM what hath been ſaid it is plain that the very beſt argument,
ich is brought for an equality of miniſterial functions, is, when fairly
amin'd, no argument at all. Our Saviour is term'd an Apoſtle, *Heb.*
1. a Biſhop and Paſtor, 1 *Pet.* 2. 25. a Maſter, or Doctor, *Mat.* 23 10.
Miniſter or Deacon, *Rom.* 15. 8. but theſe names certainly do not de-
ade him to an equality with Deacons, with Biſhops, or even with the
poſtles themſelves. If becauſe the Biſhops are in Scripture ſtil'd Pres-
ters, all Presbyters therefore are their equals, then becauſe the Apo-

ſtles ſtile themſelves alſo Presbyters, every Presbyter will be equal to an Apoſtle: and the ſame argument will bring the Apoſtles down ſtill lower, it being certain that in Scripture they are ſometimes call'd alſo Deacons. But whatever becomes of this confuſion of names, it hath above been, I hope, ſufficiently made out, that the characters and functions of Biſhop and Presbyter were ever, and therefore ought for ever to be, diſtinct.

I AM afraid that what hath been ſaid upon this ſubject may by ſome be thought too controverſial, and of no great uſe to the direction of our practice. For ſeveral are apt to think, that it is of no great moment by whom the Church of Chriſt is govern'd; and therefore don't care to be troubled with a curious enquiry, who have, or have not, authority to be Governours in it. But when the Government of our Church is by the adverſaries of it accus'd to be diſagreeable to the Word of God, when ſuch diſagreement is urg'd as a reaſon againſt communicating with us, it is very proper for us, who think withdrawing from our communion without juſt cauſe a great ſin, to ſhew that the government of our Church is ſo far from being a good reaſon to divide from it, that on the other ſide the want of ſuch a government would be an objection againſt us, which we could not well know how to anſwer. That there is no ſalvation out of an Epiſcopal communion; that thoſe who cauſeleſsly ſeparate themſelves from their Biſhops, do at the ſame time ſeparate themſelves from Chriſt; that the prayers which they make, or the prayers which are made for them, whilſt they are in ſuch a ſtate of ſeparation, are vain and ineffectual; that the Word which they hear, and the Sacraments which they receive from perſons unauthoriz'd to preach the Word, and adminiſter the Sacraments, convey no benefit to them, however otherwiſe well diſpos'd, are ſevere opinions, which, tho' maintain'd by very learned and very pious men, we ſhould out of mere pity be ſomewhat unwilling to make our own. For tho' perhaps one ſhould not be able eaſily to confute them, yet ſuch are the harſh conſequences of them, that I ſhould not care to embrace them. Sufficient it is for us, that in the communion of our Church we are ſafe: whether Sacraments adminiſtred by perſons uncommiſſion'd are valid, or not; whether Presbyters can give a legal commiſſion to adminiſter the Sacraments, or not, is a matter of diſpute; but whether Biſhops have a right of ordaining; whether thoſe who are ſent by them, are lawfully ſent; whether their authority to preach the Word and adminiſter the Sacraments is valid or not, never was, never can be controverted.

LET us therefore thank God for the preſervation of this ſacred *Order* in our Church; let us pray for the continuance of it, where it hath been hitherto preſerv'd; and for the reſtauration of it, where it hath been thro' neceſſity interrupted, or thro' faction aboliſh'd. Let us quietly and dutifully *ſubmit to thoſe who have*, and who by the will of Chriſt and the inſtitution of his Apoſtles ought to have, *the rule over us*; let us honour their perſons, reverence their characters, and obey their lawful commands; let us *ſubmit* to them, whom God hath appointed to *watch for our ſouls, as they that muſt give account*. Now that we may ſo demean our ſelves, towards our Governours, towards all men, towards our ſelves, towards our God, that *they, who are to give an account* for us, *may do it with joy, and not with grief*, and that we, who muſt give an account for our ſelves may be acquitted, and not condemn'd, God of his infinite mercy grant.

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SERMON

PREACH'D BEFORE

THE HONOURABLE

HOUSE of COMMONS,

AT

St. *MARGARET'S WESTMINSTER,*

Jan. 30. 170$\frac{1}{2}$.

BEING

The Anniverſary Faſt

OF THE

MARTYRDOM

OF

King *CHARLES* I.

SERMON XII.

The fatal Conſequences of too ſtrict an Union of good and well-meaning men with perſons of ill Principles and ſcandalous Characters.

GEN. XLIX. 6.

O my Soul, come not thou into their Secret; unto their Aſſembly, mine Honour, be not thou united.

THE Context runs thus: SIMEON *and* Levi *are brethren; Inſtruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my ſoul, come not thou into their ſecret; unto their aſſembly, mine honour be not thou united: for in their anger they ſlew a man, and in their ſelf-will they digged down a wall. Curſed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in* Jacob, *and ſcatter them in* Iſrael.

THESE words expreſs, in a very moving and lively manner, the good Patriarch *Jacob*'s juſt abhorrence and deteſtation of a cruel and barbarous fact, with the moſt deliberate malice contriv'd, with the baſeſt treachery carried on, and with the utmoſt inhumanity executed by his two ſons, *Simeon* and *Levi,* men every way brethren, as nearly allied in temper as in birth; in their diſpoſitions and characters very much reſembling, but ſtill far out-done by thoſe Regicides, who, as upon this day, made themſelves drunk with the blood of the Lord's Anointed. In the 34th chapter of this book of *Geneſis* we have a particular account of that crime, which *Jacob* had in his view, when he utter'd theſe words; and it is impoſſible to conſider it, with all its aggravating circumſtances, without paſſing this Judgment upon the Perſons concern'd in it, that they were revengeful, cruel, implacable, treacherous; men, who had no regard to the honour of their Country, and who proſtituted Religion to the carrying on their wicked purpoſes with the greater facility and ſucceſs. An injury, it ſeems, had been done them by *Shechem the ſon of Hamor*; and upon the firſt notice of it, without any demand of ſatisfaction from him, without any appeal to authority for a legal redreſs, they enter into an haſty reſolution of avenging themſelves. Having thus made themſelves Judges in their own cauſe, they pay no regard to the ſtated rules and meaſures of Juſtice; nor obſerve any proportion between the injury they had ſuffer'd, and the puniſhment they award. Nothing leſs than the blood of the Offender can atone for his offence; nay, root and branch, is their avow'd principle, and for the ſin of *Shechem* an utter extirpation is decreed againſt the whole race of the *Shechemites*. Overtures of an accommodation, when offer'd, ſeem'd to be accepted by them; but under the diſguiſe of a treaty they proſecute their revengeful purpoſes; and *whilſt they ſpeak of peace, they make themſelves ready for war.*

An action thus foul and diſhonourable was ſure to be univerſally deteſted; and would, in the language of their father, *make them ſtink among the inhabitants of the land*: But being paſt all ſenſe of ſhame, having ſhaken off all concern for the glory of their Nation, they obſtinately proceed in the perpetration of a crime, which muſt unavoidably expoſe both them, and their Poſterity to the reproach and hatred of all countries, and all ages. But to render their villany compleat, and to give it its finiſhing ſtroke, a form of godlineſs muſt be put on; they were the people of God, and could have no commerce with any who refus'd to enter into their covenant; *We cannot*, ſay they, *do this thing, to give our ſiſter to one that is uncircumcis'd*; that had been a reproach to them, and a wound to their tender conſciences. But this hypocritical pretence of zeal for the true Religion, ſerv'd only for the better compaſſing their irreligious ends; and thoſe, who were ſo ſcrupulous of having any affinity with ſuch as were Aliens to God's Covenant, made no other uſe of initiating them into the ſacred Rites of it, than to murder them with the greater ſecurity and diſpatch.

Gen. 34. 30.

Gen. 34. 14.

By this repreſentation of the fact to which *Jacob* here alludes, it appears that the contrivers of it were falſe, violent, ungodly, and inhumane above the common meaſures of deprav'd nature; and yet it may be affirm'd that their crime, however extraordinary, both as to its kind, and its degree, bears no proportion to the much greater ſin of thoſe unnatural, unparallel'd, and execrable ſons of *Belial*, to whoſe brutal rage our martyr'd Soveraign was this day made a ſacrifice. Were it proper to appear an advocate in ſo bad a cauſe as that of *Simeon* and *Levi*, it would not be very difficult to find out ſome plauſible colours for the extenuation of their crime: it might be pleaded, that they were under no ties of ſubjection to thoſe, againſt whom they lifted up their hands; that the injury done them was very heinous, and provoking; that the treatment they had met with, was foul and inhoſpitable; that the great diſhonour brought upon their family was ſuch as might ſeem to juſtify a more than ordinary reſentment; that their blood was by ſuch a juſt provocation put into an high ferment, and that it was not yet cool'd, when in their anger they ſlew the *Shechemites*. But can thoſe who are unwilling to condemn, who are willing to excuſe, who are daring enough to applaud the fact of this day, offer any one ſhadow of an argument to mitigate its guilt, or to leſſen our deteſtation of it? Were the Regicides provok'd to it by any unſufferable injuries? Or, were they not

by

many repeated acts of Royal favour and clemency oblig'd? Had
ere been any ground for their complaints, yet how was *vengeance*
eirs? or whence had they authority *to repay it*? Were they not un-
r the ſtrongeſt ties of nature, and of Religion, to defend their Sove-
ign's life even with the hazard of their own? Were they not bound
ſupport his perſon, crown, and dignity by reiterated oaths, vows,
gagements, covenants, and proteſtations? And muſt not thoſe, who
oke thro' all theſe reſtraints, have been poſſeſt with a Spirit like to that
the Demoniack in the Goſpel, *whom no man could bind, no not with* Mark 5. 3.
ains; becauſe that he had been often bound with fetters and chains,
d the chains had been plucked aſunder by him, and the fetters broken
pieces; neither could any one tame him? It would be ſome abate-
nt of their ſin, if we could ſay of them, what *Jacob* here charges up-
his ſons, that *in their anger they ſlew a man*: but the murder of this
y was not the effect of a ſudden and vehement paſſion, but the reſult
long thought, ſedate judgment, and mature conſultation. How oft-
muſt nature have ſtarted back from the thoughts of a crime ſo in-
man, and ſhocking? How often muſt a ſenſe of duty, awe, and re-
rence, have been awaken'd within their breaſts? And how much miſ-
c'd pains muſt they have taken to lay ſuch motions aſleep? How
en muſt they have heard the voice of a forewarning, and felt the ter-
s of an upbraiding conſcience? With what force, with what autho-
y, muſt this ſubſtitute of God in the ſouls of men have pleaded the
oyal cauſe? And with what difficulty were ſuch powerful pleas over-
ul'd? Did the Word of God furniſh theſe men with plenty of curſes,
hich they thunder'd out upon occaſion againſt their adverſaries? And
uld they in the mean time be forgetful of all thoſe threats of the Al-
ighty, which are ſo frequently, and ſo expreſly denounc'd againſt
hoſe, *whom God has given over to a reprobate mind, being fill'd with* Rom. 1. 28.
l unrighteouſneſs, wickedneſs, maliciouſneſs; full of envy, murder,
bate, deceit, malignity; diſobedient, covenant-breakers, without na-
ral affection, implacable, unmerciful? Were not theſe terrors of the
ord well known to them? and muſt they not have frequently ſet them-
lves in array before them? And after ſo much time to conſider, ſo
ny warnings to retreat, muſt not their eyes neceſſarily be open'd to
the Angel of the Lord ſtanding as it were *in the way with his ſword* Num. 22. 23.
his hand to oppoſe them, *becauſe their way was perverſe before* v. 32.
m!

THUS complicated was the guilt of theſe Sons of violence; in whoſe
rimes we might ſeem in ſome meaſure to partake, could we hear, could
e ſpeak, could we think of them without an hearty abhorrence, and
ſt indignation. Amongſt the many good ends for which this ſolemn
Memorial was by publick Authority at firſt appointed, is ſtill conti-
ued, and will, we hope, for the terror of evil works be long preſerv'd,
his undoubtedly was one, that as the virtues and graces of the *Martyr*
ere to be mention'd to his immortal honour, ſo the enormous ſin of
is Murderers might be remembred to their everlaſting diſgrace. For
ho we may be told by ſome men of pretended moderation and temper,
hat it is now high time to lay aſide the remembrance of crimes ſo long
go committed; that the *Regicides* have long ſince anſwer'd for this fact
t the bar of publick Juſtice, or at the tribunal of God; and that it is
ot decent to implead them afreſh, who have already undergone their
ryal; yet certain it is, that ſuch an act of oblivion, as is claim'd in

their behalf, is neither due to them by the Laws of the Land, nor by the Goſpel of Chriſt. For, if to perpetuate the memory of infamous perſons and actions were any ways unſuitable to a true Goſpel-temper, if it were any breach of Chriſtian charity to brand *Traitors* and *unrighteous Judges* with an indelible mark of ignominy, the names of *Judas Iſcariot* and *Pontius Pilate* had not ſtood recorded in thoſe books, of which not *one jot or tittle ſhall periſh, till heaven and earth paſs away.* Matt. 5. 18.

A GENEROUS zeal againſt ſavage and barbarous perſons, ſome warmth of expreſſion upon the mention of uncommon and unnatural crimes, ſeems not only warranted, but even recommended to us by the example of *Jacob*: he was juſt now expiring; and we cannot ſuſpect that in his laſt moments he was tranſported by any immoderate, or unſeemly paſſion: he here gives us the character of two of his Sons; and the fondneſs of a father for his children ſhould incline him rather to leſſen, than to aggravate their faults: he was now bequeathing his dying bleſſing to his Children, and therefore muſt be diſpos'd to ſpeak the language of tenderneſs and affection. In theſe circumſtances, with theſe diſpoſitions, inſtead of bleſſing he breaks forth into a curſe: that indignation againſt the cruelty of his Sons, which had been long ſince kindled within him, and which was not yet by the length of time extinguiſh'd, extorts from him this bitter imprecation; *Curſed be their anger for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in* Jacob, *and ſcatter them in* Iſrael.

NOW if we would keep out of the reach of ſuch curſes, as are here denounc'd againſt *Simeon* and *Levi,* we muſt take care to avoid the like guilt; nor muſt we be content barely to avoid it, but we muſt be careful that we make no approaches towards it; we muſt not enter into any cloſe familiarities with men of their character; we muſt ſtand off from them, for fear of being infected by them; we muſt often ſpeak to our ſelves theſe inſtructive words of the Patriarch; *O my Soul enter not thou into their ſecret; with their aſſemblies, mine honour, be not thou united.*

THE crying ſin of this day had in all likelihood never been committed, had the caution here given been duly obſerv'd; had perſons of the ſame principles and character with *Simeon* and *Levi* found no countenance, nor encouragement from men, whom we may ſuppoſe to have had different intentions, and more juſtifiable deſigns; had none engag'd in any common meaſures with them, but thoſe to whom the whole myſtery of their iniquity was at firſt laid open. But charity inclines us to hope, and for the honour of our Nation we ſhould be diſpos'd to believe, that with thoſe rebellious ſubjects, who imbrued themſelves in the blood of their Soveraign, ſome at firſt ſat out, who were not from the beginning reſolv'd to go the ſame lengths; who, for want of ſeeing far enough into the conſequences of their actions, were not ſufficiently aware, whither they were going, and with whom they were engag'd. The beſt uſe therefore we can make of our reflections upon the miſchievous effects of ſuch a conduct, is to poſſeſs our ſelves ſtrongly with a firm perſwaſion of the truth and importance of that prudential maxim, which is couch'd under the words of my Text, that good and well-meaning men ought to be very cautious, how they joyn in publick deſigns with men of ill principles and ſcandalous characters.

GOOD men are not by the rules of Morality, or by the precepts of

the

he Goſpel, forbid all manner of correſpondence with all ſorts of wicked
erſons. Where there are probable hopes of making bad men better,
here charity obliges the good to converſe with them in order to their
eformation: or where good men are in no danger of being corrupted
y the wicked, there they are at liberty to converſe with them, with-
ut any impeachment of their wiſdom or goodneſs. Nor have the worſt
f men ſuch a wide power of doing miſchief to a good Cauſe, as that
heir appearing in it ſhould make it unlawful or inexpedient for good
en to promote it: what one purſues out of an ill motive, the other
ay proſecute with better purpoſe; what one uſes unlawful means to
mpaſs, the other may endeavour to attain by ſuch as are warrantable.
ut the agreement of good and bad men is then miſchievous, and por-
nds ill to the Publick, when they act by joint counſels, and concerted
eaſures; when there is a thorough underſtanding, and mutual confi-
ence between them; when by a cloſe and intimate alliance they are
rm'd into one band; when the oppoſition there is between them, as
od and bad men, appears much leſs remarkable than their concord,
united in one and the ſame Cauſe; when they enter as it were into
League offenſive and defenſive, ſo that all who are willing to come into
is confederacy, whatever their characters be in other regards, ſhall be
ok'd upon and embrac'd as friends; and all who ſtand out, without
y other demerit, ſhall be conſider'd and treated as enemies. Now
od and well-meaning men ought to be very cautious, how they enter
to ſuch an Union of intereſts as this with men of ill principles and
ndalous characters, for theſe two reaſons.

I. Because, by ſuch an Union they will bring a ſcandal upon themſelves, and upon Religion, tho' they ſhould not concur in the worſt deſigns of thoſe wicked men, with whom they unite.

II. Because, by ſuch an Union they are in great danger of being carried on to concur with ſuch wicked men in their very worſt deſigns.

And *Firſt*, By ſuch an Union they will bring a ſcandal upon them-
elves, and upon Religion, tho' they ſhould not concur in the worſt de-
gns of thoſe wicked men, with whom they unite.

Some good men ſeem to have entertain'd very wrong notions con-
erning the value and advantages of a fair reputation. If they can ap-
rove themſelves to God and to their own conſciences, they are not at
l ſollicitous how they ſtand in the opinion of the world. But certain
is, that this indifference of theirs to their being well or ill ſpoken of
ſo far from being commendable, that it is unwarrantable and dan-
erous; attended with many ill conſequences, and highly prejudicial
the intereſt of Virtue, and Religion. The Goſpel of Chriſt is indeed
uch more careful to provide for the purity of our hearts, and the ſin-
erity of our inward intentions, than for the bare ſurface and external
ppearance of our actions. But tho' we are by the Goſpel oblig'd to
ake the glory of God, and the approving our ſelves in his ſight, our
rſt and chief aim; yet a due care of our own eſteem and reputation,
s far as they may be ſubſervient to God's glory, is alſo by the ſame Go-
pel requir'd at our hands, as a ſtrict and indiſpenſible duty. However
herefore ſome men may think it an inſtance of humility and ſelf-de-
ial, to be wholly unconcern'd about a good or bad character, yet we

may depend upon the truth of that obſervation, which a judicious Moraliſt has long ſince made, that, "to diſregard what others think of us, "is the property not only of an arrogant, but diſſolute perſon.

Now there is nothing that can give a more fatal wound to the reputation of men otherwiſe good, than too cloſe an intimacy with perſons of infamous and profligate characters. It is ſo natural for all kinds of men to conſort with thoſe of their own diſpoſitions and principles, that it is generally look'd upon both as a compendious, and ſure way of forming a right judgment concerning any perſons whom we would know, from their familiarity with thoſe whom we do know. Where therefore the Union between good and bad men is open and viſible, whilſt the bond, which unites them, is ſecret and inviſible, moſt are apt haſtily to conclude, that there is no great difference between them; but that the former inwardly are as wicked, as the others outwardly appear to be. Good men may flatter themſelves that they are not reſponſible for theſe falſe judgments that are paſt upon them; that if men will thro' ignorance miſconſtrue their actions, or thro' perverſeneſs miſrepreſent them, there is no reaſon they ſhould be blam'd for other men's miſtakes or prejudices. This is indeed a plea, which, where it is truly made, ought to be readily admitted; but which thoſe men muſt not hope to reap the benefit of, who by too familiar a converſe with perſons of looſe principles and ill manners take no care to prevent miſtakes that are ſo obvious, and to remove ſuch reaſonable prejudices. Our conduct, as well as our language, is capable of a double conſtruction; what truth is in words, that goodneſs is in actions; and as a down-right honeſt man will take all poſſible care that his words be true, not only in his own ſenſe who ſpeaks them, but in their ſenſe alſo who hear them: ſo a perfectly good man will be equally concern'd, that his behaviour be right, not only in his own opinion, but alſo in the eſteem of all who ſhall obſerve it. Whoſoever therefore *enters into the ſecrets, and unites himſelf to the aſſemblies* and intereſts of wicked men, when he is aware of the ſcandal of ſuch an alliance, is juſtly accountable to God and man for all the miſchief of that ſcandal, which is not only taken, but given. What opinion muſt all lookers on entertain, when they ſee the Profeſſors of Religion unequally yok'd together with its declar'd Enemies? How unnatural, how monſtrous muſt the alliance be, when the clean 2 Cor. 6. 14, 15. are pair'd with the unclean? for, *what fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs? or what communion hath light with darkneſs, or what concord hath Chriſt with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?* Can it be thought that religious ends will be promoted, and righteous purpoſes carried on by the ſervants of unrighteouſneſs? Will it not be a diſparagement to a good Cauſe, that the champions of it ſhould be thought to want the concurrence of wicked and helliſh inſtruments? Let therefore the endeavours of good and well-deſigning men to promote the honour of Religion be never ſo ſincere; let their lives and converſations be in other reſpects never ſo exemplary; let them uſe all other means poſſible to allure mankind to the love and practice of virtue; yet the encouragement and ſupport they give to vice by ſuch an union with vicious perſons, as hath been deſcrib'd, will in the iſſue be found to do more diſſervice to Virtue, and to bring a greater diſhonour upon Religion, than the moſt ſcandalous actions of the moſt notorious ſinners.

Some perhaps may think that ſeveral of thoſe, who, in the late times

imes of confuſion, join'd in an intereſt contrary to that of the Royaliſts, vere perſons who meant well, and who truly intended the publick good; o enemies of our Conſtitution, but ſincere lovers of their Country, and ffectionately zealous for the Liberties of the people, and for the purity f Religion. God alone knows their hearts, and it becomes not us to e too forward in judging of their intentions: but were their deſigns ever ſo innocent, yet we have reaſon to lament, that their unhappy onjunction with thoſe men, whom no exceſs of charity will permit us think well of, has brought a laſting diſgrace upon their memory, and great diſhonour upon our holy Religion. How hard hath Poſterity und it to diſtinguiſh between thoſe who are ſaid to have intended the pport, and thoſe who are known to have procur'd the overthrow, of ur Engliſh Conſtitution? How difficult is it at this diſtance to diſ- rn, who they were that deſign'd to reform publick abuſes, and who ſolv'd to overturn the eſtabliſhment of Church and State? Common me has made little difference between thoſe who reſiſted, and thoſe ho murder'd, the King; and whilſt they, who pretended only to op- ſe the encroachments of Arbitrary power, have been liſted under the me colours with the enemies of Regal Government, it hath not been ſie for the generality of obſervers to find the difference between the ecious and the vile, and to diſcriminate the Patriot from the Rebel. or hath this ſuſpicious conduct caſt a greater blemiſh upon the chara- ers of men profeſſing Religion, than upon the honour of Religion it lf: whilſt pretenders to extraordinary purity have acted in conjunction ith notorious rebels, Religion has been miſunderſtood, as if it were too uch a friend, or at leaſt not enough an enemy to Faction and Rebellion; and becauſe ſeditious and traiterous practiſes have been carried on under the form of Godlineſs, ſome running into a contrary extreme have thought, they could not ſufficiently ſhew their diſlike to ſedition, ithout laying aſide all appearance of piety; and, for fear of being nk'd with hypocrites, have choſe rather to be numbred with the pro- ane.

By theſe means a great reproach hath been brought upon Religion general, and a greater ſtill upon the Reform'd: "That it is lawful to depoſe and murder Princes," was a doctrine heretofore thought pecu- ar to the Church of *Rome*; to proteſt againſt that doctrine, amongſt ther abominations of that Church, was the deſign and glory of the Reformation. How great a ſcandal therefore muſt thoſe men have brought pon the Proteſtant Religion, who, at the ſame time that they profeſs'd a ore than ordinary zeal againſt Popery, gave too much countenance ſome of the worſt principles, of the worſt men, of the worſt Church the world, in its worſt and moſt corrupted ſtate? From this great andal our holy Religion had been free, had all thoſe men, who we ould hope were truly in its intereſts, taken ſufficient care to keep at due diſtance from the counſels and meaſures of ſuch, as had no Reli- on; had they not by *uniting with their Aſſemblies,* and engaging too with them, given us a plain proof, how neceſſary it is that good d well-meaning men ſhould be nicely cautious, how they join in pu- ick deſigns with men of ill principles, and ſcandalous characters; leſt ſuch an Union they bring a ſcandal upon themſelves and upon Reli- on, tho' they do not concur in the worſt deſigns of thoſe wicked men, ith whom they are united.

A SECOND reaſon for this caution is, becauſe by ſuch an Union they are in great danger of being carried on to concur with ſuch wicked men in their very worſt deſigns.

WHEN good men are embark'd with bad, they lie under this great diſadvantage, that the intentions of the one are open and manifeſt, while the deſigns of the other lie hid, and under ground. Little skill is requir'd to know what the former aim at; but there is need of more penetration, than falls to the ſhare of every good man, to dive into the intricate counſels of the latter. Were wicked men ſo ill adviſ'd, as to diſplay the whole ſcheme of their flagitious purpoſes at one view, none but ſuch as were equally wicked with themſelves would come into it: in order therefore to draw in men of better intentions, ſuch pernicious ends muſt be induſtriouſly kept out of their ſight, and they muſt be let into the main ſecret by leiſurely ſteps, and inſenſible degrees. Now whilſt good men are unhappily prevail'd upon to go hand in hand with the wicked, and are not ſufficiently aware, whither their companions are bent, it is no wonder, that being thus blinded, they are too eaſily led out of the way. And they are the more liable to be thus practis'd upon by ſuch as lie in wait to deceive, becauſe their own plainneſs and integrity makes them unapt to ſuſpect others of artifice and doubling: for an honeſt ſimplicity of acting by the rules of uprightneſs, and an happy dexterity in finding out the wiles of the crafty and diſhoneſt, do not always go together. Good men, when engag'd with bad, are, in our Saviour's language, like *ſheep in the midſt of wolves*; but few of them are able, upon this occaſion, to follow our Saviour's advice of *being wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves*. Matt. 10. 16.

AND as for want of this neceſſary wiſdom they are too often over-reach'd by thoſe, who are well-vers'd in all the arts of deluſion; ſo are they frequently betray'd into the ſame fatal miſtakes by a miſplac'd charity, which doth indeed of it ſelf diſpoſe them to *think no evil, to believe all things, to hope all things*; but is never obſerv'd to operate ſo ſtrongly even on good men, as when they are to paſs a judgment upon the actions of thoſe, with whom they are engag'd in one common Cauſe. For the appellations of honeſt, worthy, well-principled, do in the language of thoſe who moſt uſe them, generally ſignifie no more, than that the perſons thus ſtil'd and diſtinguiſh'd do, in the Political opinions they maintain and the Civil intereſts they eſpouſe, intirely agree with thoſe who thus denominate them: ſo evident is it, that a much leſs degree of charity is neceſſary to make men believe and hope well of their own Party, than is requiſite to make them equally diſpos'd to judge favourably of others. An hearty affection therefore to a Cauſe, will go a great way towards miſleading even the beſt men in their opinions concerning thoſe who joyn with them in the ſervice of it: for ſo far as any are well-wiſhers to this Cauſe, they are adjudg'd of courſe to be truly good men; and if after this, there be any thing doubtful in their carriage, it will be conſtrued in the beſt ſenſe for the ſake of that one quality, which is look'd upon to be without doubt worthy of praiſe. Wicked men will take all poſſible care to hide their faults from the perſonal knowledge of thoſe good men, by whom, if they were better known, they would be leſs truſted; the notice therefore of theſe faults muſt come to them from the teſtimony of others; which muſt be very ſtrong, and convincing, to perſwade men of what they have no mind to be perſwaded. Now whilſt good and well-meaning men are under ſuch ſtrong prepoſſeſſions to think well of their own Party; whilſt all care poſſible is taken to keep them

in

in the dark; and whilſt they are willing enough to ſhut their eyes againſt the light, if ever it ſhould break in upon them; can it reaſonably be expected that thoſe, who are reſolv'd to judge ſo favourably of the perſons with whom they are link'd, ſhould be over-ſuſpicious of their deſigns? Is it not much rather to be fear'd, that, for want of a juſt ſuſpicion, they ſhould be unwillingly ſubſervient to them?

Now when good men, for lack of ſufficient fore-ſight, have unawares, made thoſe ſteps, which, when they give themſelves leave to reflect upon, they cannot but think were falſe ones, tho' they may perhaps have now and then a faint inclination to go back, they will find it very difficult to come to a ſteady reſolution of retreating: for in ſuch a caſe to recede is to confeſs that they were in the wrong; which is a greater degree of mortification, than even the beſt men can readily ſubmit to. Thoſe wicked perſons, who have by falſe and ſpecious pretences prevail'd upon them to go ſo far, will fright them from all thoughts of a retreat by the odious names of Apoſtate and Deſerter; and thus having by craft perſwaded them *to go one mile,* they will by force *compel them to go twain.* And they are now under the ſtronger inducements to proceed, becauſe by this confederacy with evil men, they have juſtly forfeited their reputation with the good; ſo that ſhould they be diſpos'd to leave their preſent friends, they would have no great reaſon to hope for an hearty reception from thoſe, whom they have been at ſo much pains to make their enemies. Having therefore no encouragement to expect good quarter from the oppoſite ſide, they are neceſſarily determin'd to ſtay where they are: nor are they here any longer welcome, than they are uſeful; and muſt therefore hope for protection upon no other terms, than an unſhaken fidelity to the Cauſe. When they were at firſt entred into it, they might be allow'd to judge for themſelves; but being now engag'd beyond retreat, they muſt be intirely under the direction of their Leaders: *Whilſt they were young they girded themſelves, and walk'd whither they would; but now they are old, they ſtretch forth their hands, and another girds them, and carries them whither they would not.*

John. 21. 18.

Thus are good men, whilſt they act in conjunction with men of an oppoſite character, carried on ſtep by ſtep to thoſe extremes, which, at their firſt ſetting out, they could not have thought it poſſible for them ever to have arriv'd at. It was in their own power at firſt, whether they would at all *unite themſelves to the Aſſemblies* of the wicked; but when they are once got into the circle, they are ſo far enchanted, that hey cannot find their way out again: they might perhaps be ſo creulous as to hope that the wicked, with whom they are join'd, might made ſubſervient to their good purpoſes; but their experience will the iſſue teach them, what they might have learn'd at a cheaper rate, at good men, who have too little knowledge of the world, are very oper tools for bad men of greater reach to work with. The moſt progate perſons may indeed be made the unwilling inſtruments of great od to the world; but it ſhould ſeem to be the peculiar prerogative the Almighty to make this right uſe of them. God's holineſs is infectible, and can therefore receive no taint from his making even the ns of men cooperate to the bringing about his righteous purpoſes: he a Being of infinite wiſdom, who ſeeth thro' the moſt hidden deſigns thoſe wicked perſons, whom he employs in his work; and he is furſh'd with infinite power to check them at his pleaſure, and ſo to bend and turn them, as that they may do his work, whilſt they think they are doing their own. But ſuch a management of evil men to good purpoſes, as this, is too difficult for the beſt of mortals; it is above them, *they cannot attain unto it.* Neither is their ſanctity ſo inviolable, as to be proof againſt infection; nor their knowledge ſo infallible, as to ſecure them from being impos'd upon; nor their power ſo uncontrollable, that they ſhould be in no danger of being over-rul'd. Great is the contagion of vice, and good men cannot be too careful to keep out of the Ecclus. 13. 1. reach of it: *He that toucheth pitch,* ſaith the wiſe man, *ſhall be defiled therewith.* Great is the frailty of virtue, and good men cannot be too cautious how they expoſe it to the aſſaults of the wicked. For as the v. 2. ſame wiſe man obſerves; *How agree the kettle and the earthen pot together? if the one be ſmitten againſt the other, it ſhall be broken.*

THAT what hath been ſaid concerning the great danger of being carried on to the worſt deſigns of wicked men by too cloſe a combination with them, is not an empty ſpeculation, but grounded in the nature of the thing, and verified by experience, is plain from the progreſs of that Rebellion, which at laſt ended in the conſummate villainy of this Pſal. 2. 2. day. Could thoſe who *took counſel together againſt the Lord's Anointed,* have foreſeen from the beginning all the fatal conſequences, which were ſucceſſively haſtning on; could they, when they eſpied *as it were a little cloud ariſing out of the ſea, like a man's hand,* have from that time prognoſticated, what winds and ſtorms were thenceforth gathering; could they have taken in at one view the confuſions of a long war, the deſolation of a flouriſhing Kingdom, and the overthrow of a truly primitive and Apoſtolical Church; could they have been then convinc'd, that the meaſures they took would neceſſarily end in the total loſs of all their Civil rights; that the intire frame of the Government would be ſhatter'd, and broken to pieces, and that the wiſe and wholſom Conſtitutio of Parliaments would be effectually deſtroy'd; could they have fo known, that their ſtruggle for Liberty would in the event make the abſolute Slaves; that the weapons, which they put into the hands of mercenary men, would be pointed upon themſelves; and that inſtead of a lawful Prince governing them with a paternal affection, Tyrants ſhould 1 Kings 12. 11. ſet themſelves over them, *who would chaſtiſe them with Scorpions;* could they have preſag'd, what a long train of evils they would entail upon their Poſterity; evils, which we at this day feel, and from which nothing but the conduct of a valiant Prince, the wiſdom of a truly Engliſh Parliament, and the Providence of a gracious God can reſcue us; could they, in a word, have had a clear proſpect of all thoſe ſins and miſeries which were to uſher in, to accompany, and to follow an inteſtine war; ſuch a frightful ſcene as this would have ſcar'd all, who were not deſperately wicked, from having any ſhare in beginning thoſe troubles, of which they could ſee no end. But thoſe Maſter-workmen, who laid the foundation of all theſe miſchiefs, were too wiſe to let their Under-labourers into the knowledge of the whole ſcheme: this was a ſecret proper to be imparted to them by degrees, and according as they were able to bear it. To have told them at firſt, that they were oppreſs'd, and that they could not do themſelves and their Country juſtice without murdering the Tyrant, who oppreſs'd them, would have been too harſh a doctrine, and not eaſily digeſted: to make it therefore leſs diſtaſtful, and more likely to be receiv'd, it was expedient that it ſhould Iſai. 27. 10. be given *precept after precept, line after line, here a little and there a little.*

tle. Thoſe, who were told and perſwaded that they were oppreſs'd, re eaſily wrought upon to petition for a redreſs of grievances: had ey ſtopt there, and been decent in their addreſſes of this kind, the nſtitution might thus far have juſtified them: but Petitions ſoon pav'd e way to Remonſtrances, and Remonſtrances to tumults. When they d inſulted their Soveraign in his Palace, they were leſs ſcrupulous of king up arms againſt him in the field; to treat him as a Captive whom y had overcome in war, and to ſeize upon the ſpoil, was with them ly to exerciſe the right of conqueſt. After they had dethron'd their nce, to paſs ſentence upon him, and to condemn and execute him a common Malefactor, was a larger ſtep indeed than any of the for- r, and which few thereſore, even of thoſe who had gone on undaunted- thus far, could be prevail'd upon to make; but which, after ſuch a ogreſs from one degree of inſolence to another, is not wholly impoſſi- to be accounted for.

THUS have I endeavour'd to repreſent the fatal conſequences of too ct an Union of good, and well-meaning men with perſons of ill prin- les and characters, both from the reaſon of the thing, and from that arkable inſtance, which the ſin of this day affords us: and God grant t neither our State, nor our Church, may ever in this age, or in ſe to come, feel the miſchiefs of ſuch an unhappy Conjunction. May be nicely ſcrupulous, how we enter into too near a fellowſhip with y ſort of evil doers; may we be in a more eſpecial manner cautious, w we joyn our ſelves with perſons of ſuch principles and practiſes, the Patriarch of my text deteſted and curs'd in his two degenerate Sons, *Simeon* and *Levi*.

WE have here in the preſence of God humbly and devoutly implor'd his mercy, "that the guilt of that ſacred and innocent blood, which was "as upon this day ſhed, may not at any time be viſited upon us, or our "Poſterity". Now if we have not offer'd unto God the ſacrifice of fools, we have not been guilty of the groſſeſt hypocriſy and prevarication, e muſt in our conſciences be thoroughly perſwaded of the piety and nocency of the Royal Martyr: what we have confeſt with our mouths, muſt believe in our hearts, that the murder this day committed was n abominable in the ſight of God, and which ought to be abhor'd by good men. And undoubtedly, whilſt there ſhall be any diſtinction kept up amongſt us between right and wrong, order and confuſion, go- rnment and anarchy; whilſt *to do well, and ſuffer patiently for well-* 1 Pet. 2. 20.
ing ſhall be eſteem'd *praiſe-worthy*; and *to perſecute the righteous,* *d ſlay the innocent* ſhall be a character of reproach; whilſt *love, peace,* Gal. 5. 22,23.
g-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith, meekneſs, and temperance, all be numbred amongſt *the fruits of the ſpirit*; and *hatred, variance,* v. 20,21.
rath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies, envyings, murders, and ſuch like ſhall nd in that black catalogue, which St. *Paul* has given us of capital and mnable ſins; ſo long the *memory of this righteous* Prince *ſhall be* *ſſed*, and the *name of his wicked* Deſtroyers *ſhall rot*. And *Bleſſed,* Mat. 5. 10.
doubt not, is *he who was perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake, for his* *the kingdom of heaven*: *Curſed* ſhall be the memory of *thoſe who took* Deut. 27. 25.
reward to ſlay an innocent perſon; *and all the people ſhall ſay*, Amen.

A

SERMON

Preach'd Before

THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

The Court of Aldermen,

AT

The Cathedral Church of St. *Paul*, *London*;

On *Monday*, *January* 31. 170$\frac{8}{9}$.

BEING

The Anniverſary Faſt

OF THE

MARTYRDOM

OF

King *CHARLES* I.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES DUNCOMBE,

LORD MAYOR of *LONDON*,

AND TO THE

COURT of ALDERMEN.

RIGHT HONOURABLE,

THAT honeſt zeal, which the following Sermon *expreſſeth againſt the murder of King* Charles the Firſt, *is the only thing in it, which could deſerve your thanks, and recommend it to your approbation: that your order for its being made publick, is an open teſtimony the world, that a diſcourſe againſt Rebellion is as acceptable the City, as at Court; and that thoſe who have forborn to* ſpeak heir minds *on ſuch occaſions, for fear of diſpleaſing, have* been fraid, where no fear was.

It is to the immortal honour of that great City, over which you preſide, that it had (even in the worſt of times) this character given of it by the the Royal Martyr, that much the better, and greater part of it, was full of love, duty, and loyalty to his Majeſty. *And that perſons of the like good affections to ou present Soveraign, may never hereafter, thro' want of vigilance, zeal, and activity, ſuffer* the infinitely meaner part i quality, and the much leſſer part in number, *to prevail ſ far, as* to alter the Government ſo well eſtabliſh'd *amongſ us*; but may gather up the courage and reſolution to joi with *her* Majeſty, in defence of that Religion, Law, an Liberty, which hitherto hath, and which only can, mak themſelves, *her* Majeſty, and *her* Kingdom, happy; *is th hearty prayer of,*

Right Honourable,

Your moſt Humble,

and Obedient Servant,

George Smalridge

SERMON XIII.

Preach'd before
THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL
THE
OURT of ALDERMEN, &c.

JUDGES XIX. 30.

nd it was ſo, that all that ſaw it, ſaid, There was no ſuch deed done, nor ſeen, from the day that the children of Iſrael came up out of the land of Egypt, unto this day: conſider of it, take advice, and ſpeak your minds.

THE barbarous Fact, to which theſe words refer, is ſet forth at large, with all its aggravating circumſtances, in the foregoing verſes of this chapter. To enter into the particulars of it, is neither neceſſary, nor proper: I ſhall only in general obſerve, that it was committed in a time
 anarchy and confuſion, *when there was no King in Iſrael*; that verſ. 1.
 was not a crime of any one ſingle denomination, but a complicated
iece of villainy, involving in it the guilt of many groſs and enormous
ns; and that the perſons concern'd in the commiſſion of it, were *cer-* verſ. 22.
ain ſons of Belial, void of all pity, regardleſs of ſhame, and as unre-
rain'd by any principles of Religion, or remorſe of conſcience, as if
ey had been equally ſure, that there was then no God in heaven, as,
at there was no King in Iſrael. This conſummate wickedneſs was
one in *Gibeah*, and a report of it ſent to the tribes of *Iſrael.* All
hoſe whom the fame of it reach'd, did, upon their firſt hearing it, pro-
ounce, that *there was no ſuch deed done, nor ſeen, from the day
hat the children of Iſrael came up out of the land of Egypt, till that
day.* But altho' they had, without the leaſt deliberating about it in
their own breaſts, and without conſulting the opinions of others, paſs'd

this judgment upon it; yet they are call'd upon farther to *conſider o* *it, to take advice*, and then *to ſpeak their minds*: ſo that from the word there do ariſe three obſervations:

I. That there are ſome Actions ſo ſhocking, that all men do, upon the firſt hearing of them, without taking time to conſider, without asking the opinion of others, unanimouſly agree to condem them.

II. That altho' ſuch Actions do, at the firſt view, appear ver odious; yet in order to confirm, or rectify our firſt judgments o them, it is proper to *conſider* them farther, and to *take* in the *advice* of others.

III. That when any Actions do, both at the firſt view, and alſo upon farther enquiry, appear very flagitious, we ſhould then, without any reſerve, openly and freely ſpeak our minds concerning them.

To each of theſe heads I ſhall ſpeak ſeverally, and apply what I ſhal ſay upon each to that execrable Fact, for which we are this day humbling our ſelves in the ſight of God.

Firſt Then I obſerve, that there are ſome Actions ſo ſhocking that all men do, upon the firſt hearing of them, without taking time to conſider, without asking the opinion of others, unanimouſly agree to condemn them.

However men may differ in their opinions concerning the meaſures of truth, and the ways by which we do arrive at the firſt notices of things; yet it is agreed by all, becauſe atteſted by the common experience of all, that there are ſome truths, which we do more eaſily diſcover, and more readily and firmly aſſent to, than others. For ſome are the reſults of long enquiry, and cloſe reaſoning; whilſt others offer themſelves to our thoughts of their own accord; thruſt in upon us, whether we will or not; and ſeem not ſo much to court our aſſent, as to command it. We find our ſelves neceſſarily determin'd, in ſome caſes to judge one way, rather than another; and tho' we ſtrive never ſo much we cannot prevail upon our ſelves to alter, or ſo much as to call in queſtion, ſuch judgments. Theſe truths, when examin'd afterwards by reaſon, are found to be very agreeable to it; but they do not wait for ſuch examination, before they can gain admittance into our belief; but are allow'd, without paſſing any teſt, barely on their own account and credit. Thoſe who never reaſon at all about them, are as ſtrongly, tho not upon ſo good grounds, perſwaded of them, as thoſe who reaſon moſt; and tho' they may be capable of receiving, from proof and authority, an additional ſtrength, yet they do not at all want it.

Now, amongſt thoſe truths, which do thus prevent all reaſoning, and gain our aſſent upon the firſt view, I think, we may juſtly reckon thoſe judgments, which we form concerning the eſſential differences of moral good and evil. For our ſight is not more quick in diſcerning the variety of figures and colours, nor more taken with the beauty of ſome, or diſpleas'd with the deformity of others; the niceſt ear hath not a more diſtinct perception of the harmony or diſcord of ſounds; nor doth the moſt delicate palate more accurately diſtinguiſh taſtes, than our intellectual faculties do apprehend the plain and familiar diſtinction between right and wrong, honeſt and diſhoneſt, good and evil, and find an agree-

ableneſs

leneſs and ſatisfaction in the one, a diſagreeableneſs and diſſatisfa-
on in the other. Hence is it, that the Prophet *Iſaiah*, when he pro-
unces a curſe upon all thoſe, who confounded what God had plainly
ſtinguiſh'd, ſuppoſes the oppoſite kinds of human actions to be at as
at a diſtance the one from the other, as the moſt contrary qualities,
ich we are inform'd of by the reports of our ſenſes: *Wo unto them* Iſai. 5.20.
t call evil good, and good evil, that put darkneſs for light, and light
darkneſs, that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter.

I DO not ſay, that this power of readily diſcerning betwixt moral
d and evil upon the firſt view, doth extend it ſelf to all the differences
human Actions; or that in our enquiry into the rectitude or obli-
ty of ſuch as are very complex in their nature, and whoſe lawfulneſs,
unlawfulneſs depends upon a great variety and combination of cir-
mſtances, we can, in a moment, poſitively and ſurely determine, whe-
r they are good or evil; worthy of praiſe or diſpraiſe; fit to be by
men admir'd and imitated, or to be condemn'd, and avoided. Our
ſes themſelves do not inform us of every minute difference, which
o be found in thoſe things which fall under their ſpecial notice and
gnizance. The firſt departure from ſtreightneſs is not, perhaps, per-
v'd by the moſt curious and piercing eye; it ſuffices, that what is
y crooked doth preſently betray it ſelf to the ſight, tho' we cannot
ciſely determine, where its obliquity doth firſt commence. And
s alſo it is in moral Actions; ſome of them are of a mixt nature,
which the colours of good and evil are ſo blended and confuſedly put
ether, that it is ſometimes very difficult to determine, with which
t they ought to be rank'd; but ſtill, what is eminently good, or no-
iouſly evil, doth ſoon diſcover it ſelf. There is that beauty and come-
eſs in ſome Actions, which the moſt negligent and tranſient view can-
t but take notice of, and be charm'd with; that hideouſneſs and de-
mity in ſome ſins, from which human nature, as corrupt as it is,
th inſtantly ſtart back and recoil.

AND it is for very wiſe and good reaſons, that God hath ſo form'd
faculties, that concerning ſuch Actions as are extraordinary in ei-
r kind, ſuch as are extremely good, or extremely wicked, all men
uld be able to judge thus readily, and thus truly. For, in human
, it often happens, that an occaſion is given us of doing ſome great
od, or a temptation laid before us to commit ſome great evil, when
ere is no leiſure allow'd us of entring into a long deliberation, whe-
er the good or evil, to which we are invited, be really ſuch, as they
at the firſt ſight appear, or not: in which caſes it is neceſſary, that
ſhould act according to our preſent light; and therefore by Provi-
nce wiſely order'd, that we ſhould enjoy ſuch open and plain day-
ht, that there ſhould be no danger of our ſtumbling. By this method,
d hath made the ſame wholſome proviſion for the ſecurity of our
uls, as he hath done for preſerving the health of our bodies: to ſuch
eats as might prove noxious to us, and being once taken down, di-
ſted, and mingled with the maſs of our blood, might quickly deſtroy
r lives, we have often ſo ſtrong an antipathy, that we refrain from
em, merely on account of this natural averſion, without conſidering
e miſchievous conſequences, that might ariſe from our indulging our
lves in them: and in the like manner, thoſe ſins, which carry with
em the greateſt malignity, and which are moſt perillous to the ſouls
f men, do create in our minds ſuch an utter abhorrence and deteſta-

tion, that we are thereby more powerfully reſtrain'd from the Com miſſion of ſuch ſins, than we ſhould be by the bare conſideration of thoſe evil principles, from whence they flow, or thoſe manifeſt dangers, to which they do expoſe us. All men are not endu'd with ſo much penetration of thought, ſo much ſtrength of reaſoning, ſo much dexterity and skill, in deducing one truth from another, as to diſcover, or ſo much as to perceive the force of thoſe arguments, which may be brought to prove a thing wicked and abominable; but without reaſoning, without drawing any long train of inferences, without enquiring into the hidden grounds and cauſes of evil, all, who are not deſtitute of common ſenſe, do quickly perceive in groſs and heinous ſins that monſtrous turpitude and deformity, which is in it ſelf viſible, and not to be overlook'd. Thus, as ſoon as the children of *Iſrael* were inform'd, that a daughter of one of their tribes had, by the men of *Gibeah*, in a violent and outragious manner, been aſſaulted, abus'd, and murder'd; the indignation, which preſently aroſe in the breaſt of every one, who heard it, ſuperſeded the neceſſity of any tedious ſearch into the preciſe demerits of the Action; and the voice of all the people ſpoke aloud, what the voice of nature had before whiſper'd to each man's private thoughts, that ſo unparallel'd a wickedneſs deſerv'd the ſevereſt cenſure, and warranted the keeneſt reſentment.

AND, doth not the Treaſon of this day kindle in our breaſts the like juſt indignation? Can we hear of a Soveraign Prince murder'd by his own unnatural ſubjects, and doth not the bare mention of it excite i our minds the utmoſt abhorrence of ſo barbarous an Action? Do not *our ears tingle*, as ſoon as we hear of it? Are not our ſpirits immediately in a ferment, at the firſt report thereof? Doth not a fire preſently burn within us? Do we not feel our hearts glowing, on a ſu den, with an holy zeal, againſt ſo ungodly, ſo unchriſtian, ſo inhum a Deed? And are we not, by a ſort of natural inſtinct, which preven all reaſoning, which leaves no room for deliberation, neceſſarily dete min'd to conceive in our thoughts, and with our tongues to expreſs, *perfect hatred* of it? Can we look upon it to be neceſſary, can we judg it to be even ſo much as lawful for us, calmly and ſedately to delib rate, whether ſuch a Fact is to be condemn'd, or not? Is it not, in ſom degree, blame-worthy to be cool, and diſpaſſionate, upon ſo provoking an occaſion? And, ſhould we not betray too much indifference an lukewarmneſs, if we ſhould take time to conſider and adviſe, before w pretend to form any judgment about it? Need we to ſuſpend our op nions concerning it, till we have more carefully and thoroughly exa min'd it? Are we afraid of being raſh and precipitate, unleſs we im partially weigh, in an equal balance, what is to be ſaid for it, as well a what is to be ſaid againſt it? Muſt we wait, till the Apologiſts for Re bellion and Murder have *brought forth their ſtrong reaſons*, and till w have tried the ſtrength of thoſe pleas, which they have to advance, i defence of blood-ſhed and parricide, before we proceed to determine an thing in our own thoughts about them? Might we not, in this caſ ſafely appeal to the firſt judgments of thoſe, who are ſo hardy as to de fend this day's Treaſon, or even of thoſe, who were ſo wicked as t commit it? For, altho' there be no crime ſo heinous, which may no find ſome advocates; none ſo ſhocking to human nature, which men violently puſh'd on by the inſtigation of the devil, and given over t a reprobate mind by the juſt judgment of God, may not bring them-

ſelves,

lves, at laſt, to conſent unto; yet we have no reaſon to doubt, but
at the execrable Fact, of which we are now ſpeaking, did, at the
ſt propoſal of it, appear in the ſame black colours to the Patrons of
, yea, and to the very Traitors themſelves concern'd in it, as it doth
other men; that natural conſcience did, in them, for ſome time,
ar the ſame teſtimony againſt it, as it ſtill doth in others; and that
ey muſt have taken a great deal of pains to ſtifle the convictions of
eir own minds, before they could bring themſelves to excuſe, to juſ-
fy, and to approve an Action, which muſt, at firſt, have ſtrucken
em, if they were not of a different make from all other men, with a
tural horror and averſion. But that we may not ſeem, in a matter
ſo great moment, to lay too much ſtreſs upon the firſt judgments,
at men form, which, after all, perhaps, may be but prejudices, it
ll be proper for us to proceed to our

Second CONSIDERATION, that altho' ſome Actions do, at the firſt
ew, appear very odious, yet, in order to confirm or rectify our firſt
dgments of them, it is proper to conſider them farther, and to take
the advice of others.

WHEN an Action is immediately to be done by us, and there is no
me allow'd us to deliberate about it, the dictates of our own conſcience,
ing the beſt guides we have, muſt be follow'd by us. But concerning
ctions already done, we have more leiſure to judge, and therefore,
ght to take more care to judge aright. If they do, at the firſt view,
pear wicked, this is a ſhrewd indication, that they are ſo in an emi-
t degree; but, upon a farther examination into the ſeveral circum-
nces of them, we may find either good reaſons to alter our firſt opi-
on, or clearer evidence to confirm us in it. Such notions as prevail
the age in which we live, and among the perſons with whom we
nverſe; ſuch as have been inſtill'd into our minds from our infancy,
d have all along grown up with us; ſuch as we have heard often in-
lcated, and never contradicted, we are apt to look upon, as engraven
our hearts by the finger of God; when, perhaps, after all, they are
ly the prejudices of wrong education. That we may not, therefore,
miſled into error by any ſuch prepoſſeſſions, it will be expedient for
to re-examine our former judgments, and to enquire, how things will
pear upon a nicer and cloſer ſcrutiny. When a thing appears crooked
the eye upon the firſt view, we can't but pay ſo much deference to
e teſtimony of our ſenſes, as to preſume it ſuch; but becauſe this ap-
earance may ſometimes chance to proceed from a defect in the organ,
d not from any real crookedneſs in the object, for our better ſatiſ-
ction, we meaſure it by a rule, and then pronounce with more certain-
concerning it; and the ſame method we ought to obſerve, in judging
moral actions; if they, at the firſt ſight, appear notoriouſly wicked,
e cannot but entertain a violent ſuſpicion of their being ſuch; but
cauſe this appearance may ariſe from ſome corruption of our judgment,
hen there is no obliquity in the Actions themſelves, the beſt way to
event all poſſibility of error, will be to examine them by the only in-
llible teſt, the Law of God: if they will abide that trial, they are not,
us, raſhly to be condemn'd; if, upon a deliberate, fair, and impar-
al examination, they are found plainly repugnant to the declared will
f God, we cannot be thought too dogmatical or peremptory, in paſſing
ntence of condemnation againſt them.

BUT this ſentence will carry ſtill more weight and authority with it,

if

if we do not depend too much upon our own judgments, but call in the advice of others. Men are ſo apt to differ in their opinions, and take ſo great a delight in contradicting each other, that thoſe truths muſt carry with them a more than ordinary degree of evidence, in which all, or moſt men do agree. He who conſiders, what a wide difference there is in the ways of men's thinking and judging, from the difference of their complexions, tempers, education, character, profeſſion, age, religion, and other innumerable ſpecialties, by which they are diſtinguiſh'd one from another, and diſpos'd to form very different judgments concerning the ſame perſons or things, will not be ſurpris'd to find, that ſeveral men do ſeldom concur in the verdict, which they paſs upon thoſe actions, that fall within their obſervation and cognizance. Some ſpeculative truths there are, in which the intereſts of men being not at all concern'd, all may unanimouſly agree: ſome rules of life there may be, tho' theſe much fewer than the other, which moſt men may join in the approbation of: ſome virtues or vices, which, conſider'd abſtractedly, and without regard to perſons, they may agree to praiſe, or to condemn: but when they come to judge of actions, not as they are in idea and theory, but as they are in reality and fact; nor as they are in books, but as they are perform'd by ſuch and ſuch men; here ſeveral things will offer themſelves to influence and biaſs their judgments. When therefore, notwithſtanding there are ſo many and ſtrong obſtacles to hinder men from concurring in their opinions, any actions are condemn'd by a general conſent, this unanimity of judgment is, tho' not a demonſtrative proof, yet a very ſtrong preſumption, that ſuch actions are notoriouſly wicked, and in reality ſuch, as they do univerſally appear.

Now, if we take theſe meaſures in regulating our judgments concerning that black Treaſon, which hath made this day unto us *a day of ſhame and reproach, a day of mourning and lamentation*; if we exami it narrowly in all its parts, if we try it by the rules of Morality, La and Religion; there will be as much difference between the degrees of guilt, which will then appear, and thoſe which it ſeem'd to have upon a tranſitory view, as there is between the dimenſions of an object cloſely obſerv'd by the help of the beſt glaſſes, and ſlightly glanc'd upon by the naked eye. But this flagitious wickedneſs hath been ſo often, and ſo thoroughly conſider'd; the beſt and wiſeſt men have ſo frequently declar'd their opinions of it, and have confirm'd thoſe opinions with ſuch ſtrength of reaſoning, the heinous guilt thereof hath been plac'd in ſo clear a light, and deſcrib'd in ſo lively colours, that it would be ſcarcely excuſable, at this time, to attempt a faint copy of that night-piece, which hath been drawn by the moſt maſterly hands. Should we bring into one comprehenſive view all the various circumſtances, which jointly contribute to enhance the demerit of this enormous ſin; ſhould we draw up an exact catalogue of all the inſolences, indignities, perjuries, tumults, rapines, devaſtations, and murders, that prepar'd the way for it; and all the diſorders, confuſions, oppreſſions, and tyrannies, that follow'd it; ſhould we take into our conſideration the perſonal virtues, and ſacred character of that bleſſed Prince, whoſe Innocence ought to have ſecur'd him from all harm, had he been reſponſible for his conduct at any human bar; and whoſe Majeſty ought to have exempted him from violence, had he been guilty of the crimes unjuſtly laid to his charge; ſhould we repreſent to our thoughts the many and the ſtrong obligations, which his rebellious ſubjects lay under, from gratitude, honour, lity, the laws of nature, the laws of the land, and the laws of God, which bonds, *when the ſpirit of the Lord,* as they impiouſly pre- ded, *came mightily upon them, were preſently broken, as a thread ow is broken, when it toucheth the fire*; ſhould we run through the gical hiſtory of their crimes and his ſufferings, and follow him from ce to palace, from camp to camp, from priſon to priſon, till, at we attend him on the ſcaffold; ſhould we reflect on the deliberate ice, wherewith this helliſh Deed was deſign'd; the ſteady wicked- , wherewith it was carry'd on; and the remorſleſs cruelty, where- it was accompliſh'd; ſhould we take in to the account the diſho- done thereby to our Country, and to our Religion, and the bold pro- tion of God's name, in begging his guidance and aid in the viola- of his laws, and aſcribing to him the praiſe of thoſe Actions, where- he was, in the moſt ſacrilegious manner, blaſphem'd; ſhould we, in rt, look backwards upon all thoſe calamities, which our fathers and have felt, or forwards upon all thoſe miſeries, which we and our terity have yet reaſon to fear, either as the natural conſequences of great ſin, or as the juſt judgments of God on the account of it: ſuch preſentation as this, however imperfect and ſhort of the truth, muſt eſſarily confirm us in the opinion, which we had, upon the firſt view, ertain'd, of the execrableneſs of this Fact; and extort from us an n declaration againſt that wickedneſs, which we cannot but, from very bottom of our hearts, abhor. For, as we obſerv'd, in the *Third* AND laſt place, when any Actions do, both upon the firſt view, alſo upon a farther enquiry, appear very flagitious, we ſhould then, hout any reſerve, openly and freely *ſpeak our minds* concerning m.

N vain do our natural conſciences bear teſtimony againſt notorious crying ſins, in vain is that teſtimony ſtrengthned by the concur- t ſuffrages of Reaſon and of Religion, if, when we have taken due e to form our opinions aright, and are under any obligations of ju- e or charity to declare them, we are either ſo falſe as to ſpeak againſt minds, or ſo puſillanimous as not to *ſpeak our minds* frankly and nly. A mark of infamy hath, by the univerſal conſent of all civi- nations, been ſet upon ſome Actions, tending either to the great paragement of human nature, or to the great diſturbance of civil ſo- ties; that a ſenſe of ſhame, and fear of diſgrace, might be powerful rbs to reſtrain men from doing ſuch vile things, as would be ſure to in their reputations, and to fix an indelible blot of ignominy upon eir memories. But this dread of infamy can no longer prove a reſtraint, an whilſt Actions really ſcandalous meet with that juſt reproach, which ey deſerve; this law of opinion or reputation, whereby it is agreed, at ſuch and ſuch vices ſhall be puniſh'd with diſrepute, will, like other ws, loſe all its force and energy, unleſs thoſe, who are entruſted with e adminiſtration of it, take care to put it duly in execution.

WHATEVER good reaſons there are, why the names of perſons emi- nt for virtue ſhould be mention'd with eſteem in their own time, and liver'd down with honour to poſterity, the ſame are equally ſtrong r branding the memories of wicked men with laſting marks of diſ- ace; ſince the canonizing of Saints doth not more manifeſtly tend to e advancement of virtue, than the ſtigmatizing of Villains doth to the ppreſſion of vice. There are, indeed, greater rewards laid up for the

godly, and ſorer judgments kept in ſtore for ſinners, than their being
membred with honour or infamy; but ſtill, it is one conſiderable pa
of the juſt man's recompence, that *his memory ſhall be bleſſed*, and
the wicked man's puniſhment, which ought to come home to him, th
his name ſhall rot. The greateſt miſchief that can poſſibly be done
the ſouls of men, is to diſcourage them from doing their duty, by ſpea
ing evil of what God hath commanded, and to encourage them in the co
miſſion of ſin, by ſpeaking well of what God hath condemn'd; and ther
fore a *wo* is, as you have heard, juſtly denounc'd, by the Prophet *Iſaia*
againſt thoſe *who call good evil, and evil good*: But the intereſts of v
tue and piety are alſo very much endamag'd by thoſe, who, tho' th
do not go ſo far as to call evil good, do yet, by a criminal ſilence, fo
bear to call it evil; and, therefore, thoſe Prieſts are accus'd by G
Ezek. 22. 26. *of violating his Laws, and profaning his holy things, who put no diff*
rence between the holy and profane, neither ſhew the difference betwe
the clean and the unclean.

God forbid, that any Preachers of the Goſpel ſhould ſo far exce
the bounds of their commiſſion, as to *curſe thoſe, whom God hath*
curs'd, or to defy thoſe whom the Lord hath not defied: as it becom
none but *mad-men* to throw about *fire-brands*, *arrows*, and *death*;
is it proper for none but wild enthuſiaſts to thunder out, at rando
hell and damnation. But ſtill, if we will be true to our truſt, we m
declare the laws and the judgments of God againſt notorious ſinner
Deut. 27. 17, 18, 25. and when God requires, that *curſes* in his name ſhould be proclai
againſt thoſe, *who remove ancient land-marks*; againſt thoſe, *that pe*
vert judgment; and againſt thoſe, *that take a reward to ſlay the inn*
cent; neither do the *Levites* diſcharge their duties, unleſs they *ſpea*
theſe things aloud in the ears of the people; nor the people theirs, u
leſs, in acknowledgment that the curſes of God are due to theſe ſi
v. 26. *they ſay, Amen*.

A false notion ſeems to have been taken up of late years, as i
were not conſiſtent with a true Chriſtian temper to inveigh againſt t
Treaſon of thoſe Regicides, who imbrued their hands in the blood
their martyr'd Soveraign; as if it became us rather to caſt a veil ov
it, than to expoſe it to publick view; and as if the memorial of it oug
at laſt, to be diſcontinued; leſt, by going on to rip up old ſores, w
tranſgreſs the bounds of charity and moderation. But are Murder a
Rebellion ſins that, at any time, ought to be touch'd gently, and to b
handled with caution and tenderneſs? Or, are thoſe ſins become le
abominable in the ſight of God, or leſs deteſtable by good men, in ou
days, than they were in the days of our fathers? Hath not the legiſla
tive authority ſet apart this day, on purpoſe, that the guilt of that ſ
cred and innocent blood, which was ſhed thereon, might be confeſſ
and lamented? And ſhould that guilt be, on ſuch occaſions, ſtifled, e
tenuated, diſſembled? Is it ſeaſonable, to preach againſt Rebellion u
on the fifth of *November*? And is the ſame doctrine unſeaſonable upo
the thirtieth of *January*? Are Treaſon and Bloodſhed things of ſo i
different a nature, that we ought not raſhly to cenſure them, who ſpe
this day in revellings and feaſtings, but charitably to ſuppoſe, that,
Rom. 14: 6. *He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord*; ſo *he that r*
gardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it? Have any a
terations been made, of late, in the Decalogue? And is the fifth com

mandment,

mandment, which enjoins reverence and obedience to our Governours,
r the sixth, which prohibits murder, repeal'd? Was the murder of King
Charles committed so long ago, that it's high time it should now be
orgotten? But, is not the murder of the righteous Abel of a much ear-
er date, and hath not God in his Word set such a mark upon Cain, that
is sin shall never be forgotten? Was not Aaron's rod, by the positive
ommand of God, laid up in the Ark, that it might be kept for a token Num. 17. 10.
gainst the Rebels, thro' all succeeding generations? The acts of Zimri, 1 Kings 16. 20.
d *his Treason that he wrought, were they not written in the books*
the Chronicles of the kings of Iſrael? And were they not therefore
ritten there, that they might be ſure to be remembred? Were none
the four Evangeliſts men of a Goſpel-temper? And doth any one of
em let the name of *Judas* paſs, without fixing a mark upon him, as
Traitor? Did not St. *Stephen*, at the ſame time that he pray'd unto
od, *that he would not lay to the charge of his murderers their ſin*,
ſplay the guilt of them, and their anceſtors, in its proper colours? *Te* Acts 7. 51, 52.
ff-necked, and uncircumciſed in heart and ears: ye do always reſiſt
e holy Ghoſt; as your fathers did, ſo do ye. Which of the Prophets
ve not your fathers perſecuted? And they have ſlain them, which
wed before of the coming of the Juſt One, of whom ye have been now
e betrayers and murderers. Shall we accuſe this holy Martyr of *bit-*
rneſs and wrath, becauſe he uſed this *plainneſs of ſpeech*, when he
oke of *Traitors* and *Murderers*? But had not the bleſſed *Jeſus* him-
f ſpoken the very ſame language upon the ſame occaſion? *Te be wit-* Matth. 23. 31.
ſſes unto your ſelves, that ye are the children of them that killed the
ophets: Fill ye up then the meaſure of your fathers, ye ſerpents, ye
neration of vipers, —— *that upon you may come all the righteous blood*
d upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of
charias, Son of Barachias, whom ye ſlew between the temple and
e altar.

IT is no wonder, if ſuch keen reproofs of treachery and murder,
theſe were, cut to the heart perſons guilty of theſe crimes, and ap-
oving the deeds of their guilty anceſtors: but, certainly, we may diſ-
prove, condemn, expoſe traiterous and blood-thirſty men, without
ing offence to any guiltleſs hearers, to any favourers of the Royal
uſe. All men of religious and peaceable principles, all who fear God,
d honour his Vicegerents, will be ready, at the firſt hearing, to con-
mn; upon farther conſideration, to deteſt; and upon all proper oc-
ſions, to declare their abhorrence of, ſuch unchriſtian, ſuch unnatu-
Parricides: they will admire the virtues, pity the ſufferings, and
verence the memory of the Royal Martyr: they will, with ſhame and
rrow, look back upon thoſe days of darkneſs and of gloomineſs, *when* Lam. 2. 1.
e Lord cover'd the daughter of Zion with a cloud, and in the indi-
ation of his anger took away from us the King and the Prieſt: they
l bleſs his holy name, for reſtoring, together with the Monarchy,
ace and order, to the State; the true Religion, and the beauty of
ineſs, to his Church: they will be deeply ſenſible of their own hap-
eſs, in living under the beſt of Governments, and the mildeſt of
inces: they will diſcountenance all ſeditious principles, that tend to
turb the quiet of her reign, and to ſhake the very foundations, on
hich all government ſtands: they will pray unto God, that her deſigns
r the good of this Church and State, which are as ſincere as the bleſ-

ſed Martyr's were, may be more ſucceſsful; that God would preſerve her from the machinations of men of the ſame wicked principles with thoſe, who made themſelves drunk with the blood of her Royal Grandfather: that ſhe may have a much longer, much quieter, and much happier reign, over loving and obedient ſubjects; and that, without treading any of the ſame wearisome ſteps, which he did, ſhe may, at laſt, arrive at thoſe happy manſions of bliſs, where his righteous ſoul liveth, and dwelleth amongſt the glorious Saints and Martyrs of God in heaven.

SERMON XIV.

God more to be fear'd than Man.

Isaiah LI. 12, 13.

——— *Who art thou, that thou ſhouldſt be afraid of a man that ſhall die, and of the ſon of man which ſhall be made as graſs? And forgetteſt the Lord thy Maker, that hath ſtretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?*

THAT of two evils the greateſt is moſt to be fear'd, is a ſelf-evident principle, which, aſſoon as it is propos'd, commands our aſſent; that he who can inflict a greater evil is more to be dreaded, than he who can inflict only a leſs, is an immediate conſequence of that ſelf-evident principle; that *the Lord our Maker, who hath ſtretch'd forth the heavens,* *nd laid the foundations of the earth,* is arm'd with greater power, and an inflict greater and more durable evils, than *man who ſhall die,* *nd the ſon of man who ſhall be made as graſs,* is more forcibly exreſs'd, than if it were in direct terms declar'd, in the expoſtulation of e text: that Man therefore is not to be fear'd, and that God is; or at Man is not to be fear'd in compariſon with God; not equally to e fear'd with him; not at all to be fear'd, when the fear of Man would etray us to do things inconſiſtent with the fear of God, and ſuch as ould argue us to have forgotten *the Lord our Maker,* is a truth as early, plainly, and fully demonſtrable as any propoſition in Matheaticks, which we are never ſo thoroughly perſwaded of.

WHEN we take a deliberate and diſtinct view of the great difference here is betwixt the anger of a finite, and an infinite Being; betwixt the errors of death, and of hell; betwixt the uneaſineſs of mind for having ffended vain Man, and the remorſe of conſcience for having defied the lmighty God; betwixt the ſufferings of the perſecuted, and the torures of the damn'd; betwixt thoſe pains, which ſo torment, as by their torture to put the tormented out of a ſtate of ſuffering, and thoſe ſeverer plagues, which ſo puniſh, as to continue the ſufferer under a perpetual capacity of miſery and torment; we find it impoſſible for us, not to think the evils which Men threaten, very light and tolerable, in reſpect of thoſe which God will inflict; and tho' we ſhould take never ſo much pains to deceive our ſelves, we cannot ſhake off this perſwaſion, that God is more to be fear'd, and leſs to be offended by us, than Man.

SHOULD any one put to us this queſtion, whether God or Man were more to be fear'd? whether of the two we ſhould take moſt care t pleaſe? we ſhould think it an affront to our reaſon, and a diſparagemen to our judgment, to have ſuch a queſtion propos'd to us. And whe we examine our ſelves, whether we ſtand in moſt awe of God or Man Deut. 7. 21. we make no doubt to anſwer, without the leaſt heſitation, that *the arm of fleſh is impotent, weak, and ſuch as we need not be much afrighte at*; but that *the Lord our God is a mighty God and terrible.*

BUT altho' we are fully convinc'd of this truth in ſpeculation; tho' w cannot deny it, without contradicting our own reaſon, and the ſtill ſure teſtimony of revelation; tho' it is a truth which overwhelms us wit its evidence, and will not ſuffer us to entertain the leaſt doubt or ſuſpicion of it; yet when we come to make uſe of this principle in the conduct of our lives, we act in downright oppoſition to it; we manage ou ſelves as if we not only entertain'd doubts about it, but were fully, an upon good grounds, convinc'd of the contrary. We profeſs indeed, tha God is more to be fear'd than Man; that he can reſtrain the will of Ma from deſigning us, and the power of Man from doing us, any harm that all the miſchiefs which Man can contrive, are either ſuch as by prudence and power we may avoid, or ſuch as by patience and courage w may endure; that all we can ſuffer from Men for doing our duty towards God, is matter of joy rather than of grief; that it is rather bleſſing to be courted, than a calamity to be ſhunn'd; that tho' it wer in it ſelf intolerable whilſt it laſted, yet that the duration of it is ver ſhort; that a wiſe man can by the ſtrength of his natural reaſon ſuppor himſelf under all the troubles, that wicked men can try him with; an that a good Chriſtian will, thro' the grace of God ſanctifying his ſufferings to him, and the hopes of a reward in the next world, proportion'd to the evils he is afflicted with in this, even triumph in *perſecutions for righteouſneſs ſake*: all this, I ſay, we own and profeſ in words, but then again diſown and confute it in our practices. Fo we knowingly and deliberately do thoſe things, which God in his holy law hath forbidden, when we are by Men commanded or ſollicited t do them; we reſolvedly omit thoſe things, which God hath expreſly, and under the ſevereſt penalties enjoyn'd, when the doing of them might render us obnoxious to the diſpleaſure of Men: by ſuch failures of the duties which God hath preſcrib'd, by ſuch commiſſions of thoſe ſins which God hath prohibited, into which we are betray'd by our immoderate ca not to offend Men, we do more plainly ſignifie it to be our ſettled opinion, that Man is more to be fear'd than God, than we can by any declarations or profeſſions of our faith ſhew it to be our real perſwaſion, that God is more to be fear'd than Man.

NOW becauſe ſuch fear of Man above God, conſidering the infinite diſproportion there is betwixt the evils each can inflict, ſeems impoſſible, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

I. THAT

I. That it is certain matter of fact, that we are more govern'd by the fear of Man than of God. Becauſe this matter of fact is ſo ſurpriſing, I ſhall in the

II. Place ſhew, how it comes to paſs, that we are in our actions more influenc'd by the fear of Man, than of God. Becauſe ſuch a conduct is highly unreaſonable, I ſhall in the

II. Place ſhew the extreme folly and unreaſonableneſs of it. Becauſe what we are convinc'd of the folly and unreaſonableneſs of, that we ought after ſuch conviction to amend, but may not be able without ſome directions to avoid, I ſhall in the

V. And laſt place give ſome rules, how we may conquer this vitious and immoderate fear of Man.

Firſt Then, it is certain matter of fact, that in the conduct of our
s we are more aw'd by the fear of Man, than we are by the fear of
. This being matter of fact is to be prov'd, not from Reaſon, or
n Scripture, but from experience and obſervation.

Now if we obſerve the actions of others, or reflect upon our own;
e examine the ſprings of our actions, and the ends we propoſe to
ſelves in acting, we ſhall ſoon be convinc'd, that the fear of Man
s riſe to more actions, than the fear of God; that the approving our
es to the opinion of Men is oftner our aim and deſign, than the ju-
ing our ſelves in the ſight of God. For, whenever we commit any
in ſecret, which we are afraid to commit openly; when we ſeek
rement and ſolitude, in order to cover our guilt from the cogniſance
Men, we then ſhew that the fear of Man lays a greater reſtraint on
than the fear of God, becauſe we dare not venture to do that in the
ſence of our fellow-creatures, which we preſume to do in the ſight
our Creator.

Again, when we affect to appear to the world religious and virtuous,
take no care to be what we would appear; when we *have the form* 2 Tim. 3. 5.
odlineſs without the power of it; when we put on ſheeps-clothing
ide the wolf, or fox, or goat, that lurks within; we then alſo ſhew,
the fear of Man hath greater efficacy upon us, than the fear of God;
e that is ſtrong enough to make us hypocrites, whilſt this is not vi-
ous enough to work its proper effect in making us inwardly and ſin-
ely good.

Again, when we are aſham'd of owning the principles of our Reli-
n, tho' we do really believe them; when we at any time affect to ap-
r worſe, than we truly are, for fear of incurring the cenſure of pre-
eneſs or ſingularity, if we ſhould profeſs our ſelves influenc'd by Re-
ion; we then alſo ſhew, that the fear of Man awes us more than the
r of God; ſince the former cauſes us to ſmother and ſtifle that open
oſeſſion, which the latter requires, but doth not prevail upon us to
ke.

Again, whenever we conceal any paſt ſin by denying it, and have a
ourſe to lying, in order to eſcape the puniſhment or ſhame annex'd
human laws, or by the opinion of the world, to actions penal or ſcan-
lous, we do then alſo ſhew, that we are more influenc'd by the fear
Men, than of God; ſince that makes us hazard our eternal ſalvation
contracting new guilt, whilſt this is not powerful enough to make
confeſs our paſt, or avoid future and greater tranſgreſſions.

Again, when we have embrac'd any errors in doctrine, or are engag'd in any evil courſes, and being convinc'd of our miſtakes, do ſtill knowingly perſiſt in them, leſt by changing our meaſures we ſhould be thoug to have been once confeſſedly in the wrong; this obſtinacy is another indication of our fearing Men more than God; ſince we had rather offend him by going on in a falſe way, than by retreating forfeit the eſteem o Men, as having been before miſtaken or miſled.

Again, when we conform our ſelves to the unwarrantable cuſtom of the world, and fall in with the modiſh follies or vices of the ag and place we live in, purely for fear of being thought unfaſhionable o ill-bred; this undue compliance is another proof of our fearing Ma more than God; ſince our conformity to the world is the effect of th one, whilſt the other hath no efficiency to make us *transform* our ſelve

Rom. 12. 2. *by the renewing of our mind* to do *what is that good, and acceptabl and perfect will of God.*

Again, when our conſciences are ſo yielding and pliant, that we ca make them readily bend to our intereſts; when we can ſo nimbly ſhi our ſails, as to ſteer with every wind; when our principles change wi the times, and luckily fall in with our occaſions, we then evidently ſhe that the fear of Men lays a ſtronger biaſs on our minds, than the fe of God; ſince that draws us aſide at pleaſure, whilſt this is too weak keep us ſteady in the right path and narrow track of duty.

Mat. 13. 21. Again, when *tribulation or perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the Wo* and *by and by* many *are offended*; when men abjure their Religion t ſave their fortunes or lives, and to avoid a preſent trouble run headlo into ſuch pernicious practices, as will render them obnoxious to eve laſting perdition; it is undeniable, that in this inſtance, they are unde greater dread of Men than of God; ſince bodily death, which is the u moſt Men threaten, ſeems ſo formidable, that to eſcape it, they run th

Mat. 10. 33. riſque of that eternal death, which ſhall be the final lot of thoſe, w *denying Chriſt before Men, ſhall be denied by him, before his Fath which is in heaven.*

As evident therefore as it is, that men commit thoſe ſins in ſecre which they dare not commit openly; that they take more care to a pear religious, than really to be religious; that in a licentious and de bauch'd age they are afraid to own themſelves to be under the influence of Religion; that they commit greater ſins to hide leſs; that they chu rather obſtinately to perſiſt in an error, than to own they were in th wrong; that they chuſe rather to break the laws of God, than to b out of faſhion; that they are time-ſervers, and play faſt and looſe wit their principles, in order to ſecure or to promote their intereſt; th

1 Tim. 1. 19. they *make ſhip-wreck of their faith* when ſtorms ariſe, and fall away i times of perſecution; ſo evident is it, that in the conduct of their live they are more ſway'd by the fear of Men, than they are by the fear o God.

Now ſince there is a vaſt diſproportion betwixt the evils threatn by Men, and thoſe threatned by God; ſince the nature of fear i ſuch, that it uſually operates, more or leſs, in proportion to the obj fear'd; ſince notwithſtanding it is undeniable matter of fact, that th miſchiefs threatned by Men do influence us more, than thoſe which a denounc'd by God; it will not be improper in the

Second Place to enquire how this comes to paſs.

Now as to the caſe of habitual, profligate, daring ſinners, their con-
t in this matter is eaſily accounted for. By a conſtant, uninterrupted
rſe of ſinning they have worn out all ſenſe of Religion, all notions
God, all apprehenſions of a future ſtate, and a judgment to come.
eſe men therefore are not to be reſtrain'd by the fear of ſuch evils,
aving often wiſh'd, and ſometimes call'd, they are apt now at laſt
hink, imaginary; and therefore it is no wonder, if they will not run
n any the leaſt danger threatned by Men, ſince they obſtinately ſhut
r eyes againſt any danger ſaid to be denounc'd by God; and think
denunciation invented only by crafty men to keep the ignorant in
. But this management is not ſo eaſy to be accounted for in the caſe
hoſe, who profeſs to be, and who ſincerely are, perſwaded of the truth
eligion; who believe, that the puniſhments threatned againſt ſinners
e Scriptures, are really denounc'd by the mouth of God, and will by
hand of God be certainly inflicted; and yet are inſenſibly carried away,
he awe of Men, to do ſuch things, as they aſſuredly know will draw
n them the diſpleaſure of God. Yet here again, if the evils threatned
very terrible, ſuch as a cruel and ſhameful death, or lingring and
menting pains, this conduct is not ſo ſurpriſing, as that we ſhould
t a loſs to ſhew the reaſons of it, tho' we muſt allow it to be, after
highly unreaſonable. For there is in us ſuch an unconquerable aver-
to exquiſite pain; miſery and torment are ſo ſhocking to fleſh and
d, ſo repugnant to that love of our ſelves, which God hath im-
ted in our breaſts, that it requires either a particular ſtrength of
d and natural courage, or rather an extraordinary effuſion of God's
e, to bear up againſt ſuch fiery trials, and to ſtand our ground firm-
ainſt ſuch ſharp and ſtrong temptations.

VERY ordinary Chriſtian, who hath ſo much government of him-
as not to be allur'd by the pleaſures of the world, may not yet be
ar maſter of his paſſions, may not have ſuch an intire command
r his blood and ſpirits, as not to be daunted by the terrors of it. Eve-
diſciple of Chriſt is not ſo great a proficient in the doctrine of the
ſs, as to reach up to that fulneſs of ſtature in Chriſt, to which St. *Paul*
arriv'd, when he could, without arrogance, declare his undaunted
rage and reſolution of mind in that magnanimous, but ſincere, pro-
on, which we find him making Rom. 8. 35. *Who ſhall ſeparate us*
n the love of Chriſt? ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or
ine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or the ſword? Nay in all theſe things v. 37, 38, 39.
are more than conquerers thro' him that loved us. For I am per-
aded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor
wers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth,
r any other creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of God,
hich is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord. Such an unſhaken reſolution, as
s, was the effect of a ſuper-abundant meaſure of God's grace, diſpens'd
one choſen veſſel, who was to be a ſpectacle to the world, to angels,
d to men; who was to ſeal the truth of the Goſpel which he preach'd,
th his own blood, and to follow cloſe *the captain of* his *ſalvation*, in Heb. 2. 10.
ing *made perfect thro' ſufferings.*

THE malice of tyrants had not been ſo buſie, as it always hath, in
nding out new and unheard-of methods of tormenting the Saints of
od, had they not been perſwaded from the reaſon of the thing, and
ometimes, tho' but rarely, in the firſt and beſt ages of the Church, taught
y experience, that theſe were likely and probable means to ſtagger

men's faith, to unſettle their minds, and to make them weary of the virtue and their Religion. The patience of Confeſſors, and courage of M tyrs, had not been ſo much applauded, as they juſtly have been, had the great difficulty of the fight added to the glory of the conqueſt. T immediate hand of God had not interpos'd ſo ſenſibly, as it often d in the ſupporting thoſe, who ſuffer'd for Chriſt's ſake, in the midſt their perſecutions, had not the violence of the trial been ſuch, as to quire ſo immediate and ſo miraculous ſupports. The diſcipline of Church had not been ſo ſevere, as it was, againſt thoſe who fell awa had not the terrors, which invited to apoſtacy, been ſo great, and powerful towards inclining men to deſert the faith, that it was though expedient to leſſen their weight and influence, by making the con quences of deſertion ſo terrible, even in this world, as that they migh counter-balance the fears on the other ſide, which diſpos'd men to it.

Now if perſecution is prov'd to be ſo ſtrong a temptation, and t faith of the generality of Chriſtians is ſo weak, it is no great matter ſurpriſe, that men ſhould often yield to the violence of ſuch preſſi trials, and ſhould be over-aw'd into ſinful compliances, by the fear thoſe evils, which, tho' they bear no proportion to the wrath of God that ſhall be reveal'd in the laſt day, are yet ſtrong enough to betr the ſuccors, which reaſon and Religion offer. For as it is impoſſi for men, when they are under the preſſure of a ſharp, violent, and to menting pain, to ſuſpend the thought of that pain, and to apply the ſelves cloſely and calmly to other matters; ſo is it next to impoſſi for thoſe, who are under the terrors of a grievous evil, hanging ov their heads, and caſting a damp upon their ſpirits, to call off their though from the conſideration of it ſo far, as to bring into their minds the vi of Religion, to examine coolly and deliberately the tendency and iſ of that action, to which they are tempted; to ſet the dangers of co pliance againſt the dangers of refuſal; to weigh impartially the reaſo which may be offer'd on the one ſide, and on the other; and to judge cording to the merits of the cauſe, after they have diſtinctly and fu ſumm'd up the evidence. Such a ſteady procedure, as this, is not be expected from men diſorder'd by any paſſion, much leſs from tho who are diſturb'd by the emotions of fear: and the remedy, which ſhou cure theſe diſorders, being not at hand, or they not diſpos'd to ma uſe of it, it is no wonder, if the diſeaſe be not check'd; or if the ev threatned by Men do over-awe them, when the evils denounc'd by Go cannot, during the violence of the temptation, be brought ſo far with in view, as to over-balance them.

The account therefore of men's being prevail'd upon by the threat of a preſent grievous evil to ſin againſt God, is in ſhort this: the evils d nounc'd by God are confeſs'd to be greater than thoſe, which Men thre ten, when they tempt us to ſin; when we coolly compare theſe evils o with the other, we cannot but own, that the former do much outweig the latter: but when a preſent evil is juſt now ready to ſeize upon u our thoughts are then wholly taken up with the conſideration of th whilſt they are thus employ'd, we can't attend to the view of a diſt evil: tho' therefore this be greater, yet being not attended to, it loſ its influence; and the preſent impending evil being conſider'd withou any reference or compariſon to any other, our only care is, how w may avoid that. If men therefore were only influenc'd by the fe of ſuch grievous calamities, as human nature is utterly averſe to, to

inſt God, this conduct would be, tho' unreaſonable, yet not unac-
ntable. But ſtill what account can be given, why men venture the
s of their immortal ſouls, to avoid evils of a much leſs magnitude;
h as are ſhame, diſrepute, diſeſteem, the diſpleaſure of ſuperiors,
diſlike of equals, or even ſometimes the diſapprobation of inferiors?
w come ſuch light, trivial, inconſiderable evils as theſe are, to weigh
much with us, as to make us rather run the hazard of our eternal
fare, than the riſque of ſuch evils, as are terrible only in imagina-
?

Now the beſt account I am able to give of ſuch an extravagant and
ſtifiable a conduct, is this: the ſins to which men are drawn by ſuch
t temptations, are not uſually of that flagrant and heinous kind, as
e are, to which they are tempted by the terrors of greater evils;
he temptation is much weaker, ſo the ſins to which they are tempted
much lighter: tho' therefore they cannot plead the violence of the
ptation; yet they are apt to hope, that the ſins into which they are
aſily betray'd, being not of the deepeſt die, will the ſooner be blot-
out. Should they offend Men by a ſtiff and unſeaſonable virtue,
would immediately incur the effects of their diſpleaſure: ſhould
once be angry with them, they might not be able, with all their
, to recover their good graces: ſhould they afterwards beg pardon
he offence which they have given, this pardon might not be granted:
ld an ill opinion be once form'd of them, it might be out of their
er to regain a good one: ſhould an ill report be ſpread of them, it
t be difficult to retrieve their character: the danger therefore of
ding Men being ſo great, the miſchief of it ſo irretrievable, they
ot, as they think, be too careful to avoid it. But on the other
if they ſhould by any ſinful compliance offend God, yet the pu-
ment for ſuch tranſgreſſion is, they ſuppoſe, at a great diſtance; tho'
ould, if executed, be as ſevere, as it is in Scripture repreſented, yet
think it may be prevented by repentance. God, ſay they, is not
intractable and auſtere Judge, who will take the advantage of frail
tures; but is always ready to forgive thoſe, who return to him, and
heir duty. Aſſoon as we recover our integrity, we ſhall be imme-
ly reconcil'd to his favour: *he* will *not deal with us after our ſins*, Pſal. 103.10.
renounce them; *nor reward us according to our iniquities*, if we
reclaim'd from them: *As the heaven is high above the earth; ſo* v. 11.
is his mercy above the mercy of men: *As far as the eaſt is from* v. 12.
weſt; *ſo far*, upon our repentance, will *he remove our tranſgreſſions*
n us. Since therefore God is ſo ſlow to anger, and ſo ready to forgive;
e men are ſo eaſy to be offended, and ſo difficult to be entreated, this
eeding *mercy* of God, which the *Pſalmiſt* thought a good ground for
being *fear'd*, is often the reaſon why Man is more fear'd than God.
good reaſon can be aſſign'd for a conduct ſo irrational; thoſe which
e been alleg'd are the beſt I am able to give. But whether we pro-
d upon theſe, or any other grounds, in being more influenc'd by the
of Man, than of God, ſuch a procedure will in the
Third PLACE eaſily be prov'd highly irrational and ſinful.

BY the order of nature our paſſions ought to be under the govern-
nt of Reaſon; by the laws of God they ought to be ſubject to the
es of Religion. Our Reaſon tells us, that the greateſt evils, are moſt
be fear'd; our Religion teaches us, that the evils to come are exceed-
gly greater than any we can feel at preſent: both Reaſon therefore

and Religion agree to condemn the avoiding leſſer evils, by running into greater, which we always do, when out of fear to offend Men, we preſume to ſin againſt God. Nor is the unreaſonableneſs of ſuch a conduct diſprov'd by the ſuppos'd diſtance of the evils annex'd to the breach of God's laws; for it is the proper office of reaſon to repreſent to our view ſuch things, as are not perceivable by our ſenſes. We are no other ways diſtinguiſh'd from unthinking and irrational creatures, than becauſe they are confin'd to the perception of preſent ſenſible things, whilſt we have the power of reviewing what is paſt, of foreſeeing what is to come, and of repreſenting to our thoughts ſuch objects as are without the reach of ſenſe. Tho' therefore to the eye a greater object at a diſtance may ſeem leſs, a leſs object plac'd nearer may ſeem greater, than it really is; yet it is the buſineſs of reaſon to correct this error of ſenſe: ſo that i we judge of evils to come, and of thoſe which are preſent, by our reaſon, and not by our ſenſes, we ſhall compare them one with another, a they are in themſelves, without any regard to their ſeveral diſtances: w ſhall conſider, that thoſe evils which are now future, will ſometime b preſent; that it is of no concernment to us, how they appear, when w apprehend them as far remov'd from us, but how they will then appear when they come to be actually felt by us. If therefore our reaſon doth aſſure us, that when they ſhall be preſent, they will by infinite degre exceed the terror of thoſe evils, which we would avoid, as being neare at hand, the diſtance of them will not make it reaſonable in us to hazard them, whilſt the certainty of their befalling us is ſo great, that our reaſon brings them home to our view, repreſents them to us, as if they were now preſent, and ſo takes away all the diſadvantage of their diſtance.

WHEN the evils, by which we are tried, are very grievous, the yielding to ſo ſtrong a temptation will indeed be ſo much the leſs crimin by how much the more they hindred us from attending to the dictates o reaſon, and the precepts of the Goſpel. God will have compaſſion up our infirmities; he will conſider the violence of the temptation, and th frailty of our natures, and will proportion the degrees of our puni ment to thoſe degrees of guilt, which our tranſgreſſions, upon a fi and impartial view of all circumſtances, ſhall be found juſtly chargea with. But tho' this may extenuate, it will not extinguiſh our guilt for if the ſins, into which we are hurried by ſuch violent temptation are very heinous and provoking, the greatneſs of the ſins may ſhut u out from thoſe hopes of mercy, which we might have entertain'd, fro conſidering the ſtrength of the temptation: but on the other ſide, if th ſins, into which we are betray'd by the fear of Men, be leſs; and the evils by the dread of which we are ſeduc'd, are alſo leſs, the weakneſs of th temptation will add very much to the weight of the ſin. Whether therefore the ſins, which we commit to avoid the diſpleaſure of Men, be gri vous, and the temptations to them ſtrong; or whether the temptation be feeble, and the ſins of a leſs heinous kind; on one ſide the greatne of the ſin, and on the other ſide the weakneſs of the temptation, w render us, according to the meaſures of unprejudic'd reaſon, and th rules of our holy Religion, altogether inexcuſable.

NOW if we are convinc'd that ſuch a conduct as this, whatever reaſons can be given for it, is highly unreaſonable; if by the tenor of the Goſpel it is evident, that ſuch an immoderate fear of Men is directly oppoſite to the rules of our holy Religion; if being convinc'd of the unreaſonableneſ

ſonableneſs and ſinfulneſs of ſuch an irregular fear of Men, we would
the future rid our ſelves of it, it will be proper in the
Fourth, AND laſt place to conſider, how we may ſubdue a paſſion,
diſorders of which are own'd to be ſo great; how we may rectify
t conduct, which is acknowledg'd to be ſo irregular.

N order to this, it will be proper for us to remember what hath been
ore obſerv'd of the occaſions of this wrong conduct. We fear Men
e than God, becauſe the evils threatned by Men are apprehended to
earer, than thoſe threatned by God. To weaken the force of this
ive to the fear of Men, we ſhould conſider that this apprehenſion
urs may be falſe; for tho' the ſentence of God againſt evil works is
always executed ſpeedily, yet the judgments of God do ſometimes
e upon the ſinner, even in the very act of ſinning. But allowing
n to be as yet far remov'd, and to advance with the ſloweſt pace;
the diſproportion which they bear to the ſoreſt evils Men can in-
, is ſo great, that if we view them together, the *treaſures of wrath* Rom. 2. 5.
ch are laid up againſt the day of wrath, cannot appear light and in-
ſiderable, notwithſtanding their preſent diſtance.

UT to take away all danger of our being impos'd upon by viewing
m as far remote, we ought in our thoughts to bring them nearer to
we ought often to *ſet the terrors of the Lord in array* before us; Job. 6. 4.
urn over in our minds thoſe attributes of God, which may moſt
ctually excite in us an holy awe and dread of him; to reflect fre-
ntly and ſeriouſly upon his irreſiſtible power, whereby he is able,
on his ſtrict juſtice, whereby he is diſpos'd, to avenge himſelf to
utmoſt on thoſe, who out of the vain fear of Men trample upon
laws, deſpiſe his threats, and defie his authority; we ought often-
es to meditate on thoſe lively characters, which the holy Scriptures
e us of the glory, and majeſty, and terribleneſs of God, and thoſe
ly and ſenſible images, which we there meet with, of the horror
conſternation which the mightieſt of men ſhall be under, when God
ll exert his power, and ſtretch forth his arm to execute vengeance
n ſinners. How elegantly doth our Prophet *Iſaiah* ſet forth the ma-
y of God, and the aſtoniſhment of ſinners, when he repreſents the
d of hoſts lifting up his banner, muſtering all his forces, and pre-
ing the weapons of his indignation to avenge himſelf on his adver-
ſaries: *Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it ſhall come* c. 13. 6, &c.
h deſtruction from the Almighty. Therefore ſhall all hands be faint,
d every man's heart ſhall melt. And they ſhall be afraid: pangs and
rows ſhall take hold of them; they ſhall be in pain as a woman that
vaileth: they ſhall be amaz'd one at another; their faces ſhall be as
mes. Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and
rce anger, to lay the land deſolate; and he ſhall deſtroy the ſinners
ereof out of it. And I will puniſh the world for their evil, and the
icked for their iniquity; and I will cauſe the arrogancy of the proud
ceaſe, and will lay low the haughtineſs of the terrible. Every word
this pompous deſcription carries awe and terror with it: Howl-
g and deſtruction, fainting of hands and meltings of heart, pangs
d ſorrows, the throws of a woman in labour, and pains of an hard
avail, amazement and confuſion of face, deſolation and final exciſion,
e the ſeveral images, which put together by the Prophet make up, in
ne exquiſite piece, the frightful ſcene of the great and terrible day of
e Lord. Such images as theſe duly attended to, and preſented often

to our view, will be a ſure method of preventing any ill impreſſions which the fear of Men may make upon our ſouls. If this fear of Go hath once taken poſſeſſion of our hearts, there will be no room for an other fear: this will employ, this will engroſs, all our thoughts; an the moſt dreadful evils, which Men can threaten, will be diſarm'd o all their terror, when compar'd to evils of ſo much a greater ſiſe, an ſo much more formidable aſpect.

AND as it will be uſeful thus to repreſent to our ſelves thoſe te rors of the Lord, which we ſhall by no skill be able to eſcape, by n firmneſs of mind be able to endure, if we ſhould provoke the divin wrath by tamely yielding to the temptations of ſinful men, ſo it wi be farther expedient for us to ſtrengthen our good reſolutions, by co ſidering thoſe ſupports, which we may expect from God, if we brav ly and manfully bear up againſt thoſe trials, by which our virtue is any time aſſaulted. The ſame power of God which will be manifeſte in our puniſhment, if we give way to the vicious fear of Men, will e ert it ſelf in our aſſiſtance, that we may effectually overcome it. Hen is it that the ſame Prophet, who hath repreſented to us the terrors the Lord, that he might fright us from deſerting our duty out of fea doth alſo inſtruct us in the promiſes of the Lord to ſuccour us, if w
Iſai. 41. 10. are fearleſs and undaunted. *Fear thou not*, ſaith the Lord, *for I a with thee: be not diſmay'd, for I am thy God: I will ſtrengthen the*
v. 13, 14. *yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of m righteouſneſs. I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, ſaying u to thee, Fear not, I will help thee: fear not, thou worm Jacob, and y men of Iſrael: I will help thee, ſaith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, th holy one of Iſrael.* The precept of not fearing Men is here, we may obſerve, often inculcated; but the aſſurance of ſupport from God, is a often renew'd: our own weakneſs and impotence might be a ſtrong i ducement to fear, were not the ſtrength and omnipotence of God e gag'd in our defence; and, *Fear not thou worm*, had been a hard do ctrine, had it not immediately been added; *I will help thee, I the Lor thy Redeemer, the holy One of Iſrael.*

HAVING therefore theſe threats, and theſe promiſes of the Lor theſe threats to terrifie us againſt all ſinful compliances, and theſe pr miſes to ſupport us in the conſcientious diſcharge of our duty, in ſpigh of all temptations from Men to the contrary, let us act like Men, wh
Rom. 4. 20. are endu'd with reaſon, and like Chriſtians, who are *ſtrong in faith*: Le us carefully compare the evils threatned by God and Men; judge o them according as they ſhall appear upon the compariſon; and according to our judgments, ſo let us act. Let not young perſons, who have been bred up in the knowledge and fear of God, and whoſe innocence hath not been yet tainted by the filthy converſation of the wicked, ſuffer themſelves to be frighted, or to be laugh'd out of their innocence, by the reproaches and ſcoffs of wicked ſeducers, who are wont to treat all ſuch as timorous and puſillanimous, who profeſs themſelves to be under the reſtraints of Religion, and are afraid to tranſgreſs the commandments of God. Let not good-nature, and good-breeding, which diſpoſe thoſe, who are endu'd with theſe excellent qualities, to live agreeably with all men, and to ſeek the love and eſteem of thoſe, with whom they familiarly converſe, prove unto them *an occaſion of falling*, by extending their complaiſance ſo far, as to incur the diſpleaſure of God, for fear of diſpleaſing ungodly Men. Let not thoſe who have liſted them-

ſelves

ves under the colours of any party, when they find their leaders car-
ing them into any meaſures, which in their hearts they cannot but
ndemn, as diſagreeable to the rules of juſtice or charity, concur in
e ſame meaſures againſt the dictates of their own conſcience, for fear
being ſuſpected and treated as deſerters of their party. In ſhort, let
all duly conſider, and carefully remember, and in the whole con-
duct of our lives, act like thoſe who are convinc'd, that it is no part
true courage to defie the Almighty, nor any ſign of cowardice to be
aid of everlaſting damnation.

FROM which God of his infinite mercy preſerve us all thro' Jeſus
Chriſt our Lord.

SERMON XV.

Of ſeeking the Glory of God.

JOHN VIII. 50.

And I ſeek not mine own Glory.

THESE words were ſpoken by our bleſſed Saviour by way of apology for himſelf, againſt the malicious and blaſphemous accuſations of the *Jews*. They had impiouſly accus'd him of being a *Samaritan, and having a devil*. v. 48. Againſt this accuſation he makes no other defence, than that he v. 49. *honour'd his Father*, and that *he ſought not his own glory*. By ſaying *he was a Samaritan, and had a devil*, if they meant any thing more than to load him with reproachful words, without any explicit ſenſe, it is probable that they inſinuated, that he was addicted to witchcraft, and dealt with the devil, as many *Samaritans* were ſuppoſed to do. His having wrought many wonderful things, which they aſcrib'd to the power of *Beelzebub*, might occaſion this reproach; which it is more likely they ſhould caſt upon him, than that of being a mad-man; which the opprobrious terms they made uſe of do not at all ſignifie, and which there was no colour or ſhadow for, in any part of our Saviour's diſcourſe or conduct. But whatever the imputation was, our Saviour declares his own innocence; and againſt a charge unſupported by any proof, it was ſufficient for him to return a naked affirmation, that his ſole ſcope in all his actions and diſcourſes was the honour of God, and that he *ſought not his own glory*.

WHICH words I ſhall conſider, not as ſpoken upon that particular occaſion, and as a vindication of our Saviour's conduct; but as propos'd to us for our imitation, and as a fit pattern for the conduct of all true and ſincere Chriſtians. *I ſeek not mine own glory*, ſaith Jeſus Chriſt of himſelf; and yet no one might with juſter reaſon ſeek his own glory, than he. He might, without injuſtice, have done every thing to that end; he might have procur'd it by eaſie and natural ways; he might have ſecur'd to himſelf the quiet enjoyment of it, without apprehending any

nger of loſing it. With men it is too uſual to ſeek their own glory;
th men, who can't long poſſeſs it, ſince it is a frail, and uncertain,
d precarious good; who can't without great trouble obtain it, ſince
e acquiſition of it is painful and difficult; and who can't without ſin
ſire it, as their chief happineſs, and ſoveraign good, and ultimate aim,
ce ſuch a deſire of it is always criminal. The glory which belongs to
ſus Chriſt, which is his due and propriety, is not the object of his de-
s: the glory, which is no ways due to men, is the phantom which
y always purſue. Jeſus Chriſt takes upon him a nature ſubordinate
his own, on purpoſe that he may ſacrifice his own glory to that of
Father, and pay unto him the homage due from an inferior to his
perior: men forget their own nature, endeavour to ſhake off their de-
ndency, and by making their own glory the main deſign of all their
ions, uſurp upon the rights of their Creator, and affect an equality
h him, if not a ſuperiority over him.

AMONGST all the obligations, which Chriſtians lie under, one of
moſt eſſential, moſt ſacred, and moſt indiſpenſable, is that of refer-
g all things to *the glory of God*; and yet of all duties, this is that, which
moſt generally, moſt ſcandalouſly neglected. Of all the ſins capable
being committed by Chriſtians, one of the moſt odious, moſt heinous,
ſt abominable, is that of *ſeeking their own glory*, making themſelves
ſcope and center of all their actions and deſigns; and yet no ſin is
e frequently, more univerſally committed. Nothing is more be-
ing a creature, nothing more acceptable and pleaſing to our Crea-
than a pure, ſimple, and diſintereſted intention of honouring God;
yet nothing is more ſeldom to be met with: nothing is more un-
able to a creature, nothing more injurious to our Creator, than an
pure, corrupt, *Phariſaical* intention of making it our ultimate de-
to gain honour to our ſelves; and yet nothing is more frequent
ong thoſe, who profeſs themſelves to be Chriſtians.

F we conſider what man is by nature; what he ought to be, in order
ulfil the law of God; and what he muſt do, to obtain the happineſs
ſpires after; all theſe conſiderations do indiſpenſably oblige him to
all his actions *to the glory of God*; to direct every thing which he
mpts, every thing which he deſigns, every thing which he ſaith,
every thing which he doth, to God, as to his ultimate end. Our
ure carries us to act for ſome end or other; and no end ſhort of the
ry of God, is adequate to the appetite implanted in us by nature.
e Goſpel of Chriſt requires, that we ſhould obſerve the laws of God,
only as to the matter of them, but alſo according to a right man-
, and out of a right principle: and we never ſerve God in a true
nner, and out of a true principle, but when we perform our duty,
his ſake, and to his honour. In order to acquire everlaſting happi-
s, we muſt do thoſe good works, which God hath commanded us,
on thoſe motives, which God hath propos'd to us; and good works
no other ways good, no otherwiſe well-pleaſing to God, no other-
e available to everlaſting ſalvation, than as they are done out of a
w of glorifying his holy name. In whatever reſpect therefore we con-
er our ſelves, whether as reaſonable Creatures, or as Chriſtians, or
deſtin'd to everlaſting happineſs, we find our ſelves oblig'd to copy
e example of our Saviour, and to ſay after him with truth and with
cerity, *I ſeek not my own glory, but the glory of God.*

THE firſt ground of this obligation is taken from our being creatures, endued with reaſon. One of the greateſt advantages of man above other creatures is this, that he hath receiv'd from the bounty of his Maker a reaſonable ſoul, endued with underſtanding, and with freedom of will, and thereby capable of determining himſelf, by choice and deliberation, to any object that he pleaſes. By this faculty we are diſtinguiſh'd from the brute beaſts, and have a near reſemblance unto that God, *who made us after his own image*. But as valuable a privilege as this is, as glorious a thing as it is to be free and undetermin'd, man muſt not reſt here, but is oblig'd to fix ſome-where: he was left indifferent, not that he ſhould continue ſo, but that he ſhould determine himſelf: that he may not always fluctuate in his deſires, be wavering in his purpoſes, and unſteady in his purſuits, he muſt form to himſelf ſome general ſcope and deſign, which muſt be the firſt ſpring of all his motions, and the laſt drift of all his actions. And as an able and ſkilful artiſt, before he undertakes any curious work, which he hopes to bring to perfection, doth in the firſt place form in his own mind a model of what he intends, according to which he ſhapes his work, and gives it all its proper dimenſions and proportions; in the like manner, a man, who would conduct himſelf by reaſon, is oblig'd to propoſe to himſelf ſome general deſign, which may fix the irreſolutions of his mind; which he may always have in his eye; and to which he may direct all his actions.

WHAT we call intention, is, properly ſpeaking, that act of the mind by which we are carried towards an object, conſider'd by us as an end by ſuch means as conduce to the attaining it; an act, which proceeds from the underſtanding, and from the will; from the underſtanding, as pointing out a proper end, and preſcribing proper methods towards compaſſing it; from the will, as actually determining us to the purſuit of ſuch end by the uſe of ſuch means. Now the nature of man is ſo contriv'd, that ſome end he muſt of neceſſity propoſe to himſelf; and if it were equal to him, whatever end he pitch'd upon, this indeed would ſhew the indifference of his will, but at the ſame time it would be an indication of the weakneſs of his underſtanding. In his choice of any end he muſt, if he acts as a rational and intelligent creature, conduct himſelf by the rules of right reaſon; and this right reaſon requires, that he ſhould propoſe to himſelf ſuch an end, as he knows to be beſt, moſt worthy of his purſuit, moſt fit to be the object of his deſires, as moſt perfective of his nature, and moſt conducing to his happineſs. Right reaſon requires, that ſince amongſt good things ſome are better and more excellent than others, man ſhould make the ſame difference in his choice which God and nature have made in the things to be choſen; right reaſon will diſcover to him, that as there are different degrees and meaſures of goodneſs, ſo there is alſo one ſoveraign good, to which they all tend, of which they do all participate, and are more or leſs good, according as they do more or leſs approach to that higheſt and greateſt good: the ſame right reaſon therefore will prompt him to conſider, to weigh, and to examine all things by this ſtandard; to prefer that which is greater to that which is leſs, that which more nearly approaches the ſoveraign good, to that which is at a farther diſtance from it; to riſe in his deſires from one degree of happineſs to another, till he at laſt comes to the higheſt; not to be content with any meaſure of bliſs, than which he can conceive a greater; to paſs thro' all the orders of created, finite, dependent goods, till at laſt he arrives to the uncreated, infinite, independent t ſource of all goodneſs; to fix upon God as his ultimate end, and eraign good; to refer all his thoughts, words, and actions to him; to learn his will in all things, in order to obey it.

FOR ſince man is not barely a creature, and as ſuch oblig'd to direct nſelf towards his Creator, but moreover a creature endow'd with un- ſtanding, and capable of eternal life, he is bound, as ſuch, to enter in- he deſigns of his Maker, and to propoſe to himſelf the ſame end, as propoſes to himſelf, that he may thereby both acquit himſelf of his y, and attain the perfection proper to him. He doth thereby ac- t himſelf of his duty; becauſe every dependent, and defective Being ht to conform himſelf, as much as poſſible, to a Being independent cloath'd with all perfection: the reaſon of man being imperfect in lf, ought to ſeek a ſupply of its imperfections from infinite wiſdom; the will of it ſelf being irregular, ought to regulate it ſelf by a will ntially right and juſt, which can be no other, than the will of God. is is the only way of acquiring that perfection, which our nature is able of: for as man cannot find within himſelf any thing that may der him perfect and happy, he muſt go out of himſelf to find this fection; he muſt ſeek it in another Being ſuperior to himſelf, who he author of all perfection; he muſt, by conſequence, as far as his kneſs permits, endeavour to adapt himſelf to the perfections of God, form himſelf to his way of thinking and acting; propoſe to himſelf ſame ends and purpoſes, and have the ſame will, the ſame deſires, ſame aims, as God hath. Now if we enquire what the will of God what the end is, which infinite wiſdom aims at, and infinite power employ'd to bring about, we are by the holy Scripture taught, that *God hath wrought all things for his glory*: for this purpoſe he made the rld, and for this purpoſe he redeem'd mankind: *The Lord hath made all things for himſelf; and for his pleaſure they are, and were created*: *of him, and through him, and to him are all things*; of him, as the cient cauſe, from which they did at firſt proceed; and to him, as the l cauſe, to which they do ultimately tend. Man therefore being ig'd by choice and upon reflection to fall in with the deſigns of his eator, and to conform himſelf to his will, it neceſſarily follows, that ought to make the glory of God his ſole and conſtant aim, and to re- to it all things which he doth, and all things which he deſires.

I HAVE perhaps dwelt a little too long upon this ſpeculation, and eated of it in too nice and ſcholaſtick a manner; but if it be conſider'd, at the whole life and ſpirit of Religion conſiſts in ordering our inten- ns aright, and in directing all our actions to their proper end, it will allow'd, that we cannot be too careful in ſhewing the neceſſity of r doing ſo, and in ſettling this neceſſary and important duty upon its oper foundations.

TO compriſe in a few words what hath been ſaid, the ſubſtance of is this: there is in man ſomething common to him with other Beings; mething peculiar to him as a rational Being: as a creature at large, is deſign'd for the glory of his Creator; as a rational Being, he ought make the glory of God his own free choice: that he may acquire e perfection which he wants, and which he is capable of, he ought to pply himſelf to God, who is ſoveraign perfection, and to propoſe to imſelf the ſame end, that infinite wiſdom doth always purſue: but the lory of God is that end for which God acts; and for this end there- ore ought man to act, that he may be like unto God.

And as we are thus bound to propoſe to our ſelves this end, as we are reaſonable creatures; ſo ſhall we find our ſelves ſtill more ſtrictly oblig'd to do it, as we are the diſciples of Chriſt. For the Goſpel requires of us, not only that we ſhould keep the laws of God, but that we ſhould obſerve them out of a right principle; not only, that we ſhould walk in that way, which God hath chalk'd out for us, but that we ſhould moreover aim at that mark, which God hath ſet up for us to purſue. There are two parts of the Evangelical law, the body, if I may ſo ſay, and the ſoul of it; the outward letter, and the inward ſpirit of it; its matter, and its form; the action which it requires to be done, and the motive which it propoſes to ſet us on work. In human legiſlatures indeed, if the act by the law preſcrib'd is duly perform'd, it matters not from what ſpring that performance riſes: for the ends of civil ſociety are ſufficiently anſwer'd, if the laws be outwardly complied with, whatever the inward intention of the complier is; and men being not able to look into the heart, would to no purpoſe give laws to regulate its motions. But God, *who ſearches the reins, and views our inmoſt thoughts*, requires the obedience of the whole man: he is not content with the exterior obſervance of his precepts, unleſs it be ſincere, and proceeds from our very hearts; he is not ſatisfied with our doing what he requires, unleſs we do it out of that motive, for which he requires it to be done. The meaſures of our duty therefore are to be taken, not ſo much from the ſubſtance of the things done by us, as from the end for which they are done; and we are to take care, not only that the thing which we do, be in it ſelf good, but that the end, for which we do it, be good alſo.

There is the ſame analogy and connexion between our intentions, and our actions, as there is betwixt faith, and good works. If we have faith, and are deſtitute of good works, this is a dead faith: if we perform good works, and are deſtitute of true faith, theſe works are unprofitable. If we faſt, pray, mortifie our bodies, give alms to the poor, renounce the pleaſures and diverſions of the world, and have not faith, we may poſſibly receive our reward at the hands of men, but we ſhall have no recompence for them before God; becauſe he approves of no works but what are entire, ſincere, and in their kind perfect; and theſe which are done without faith want that integrity, truth, and perfection, which they ought to have. And on the other ſide, if we have faith, but do not ſhew it by works worthy of a true believer, we ſhall not be juſtified in the ſight of God: we are in the true way, but we do not walk in that way; we have the foundation, but we build nothing upon *that* foundation; the root of the matter is in us, but we bring forth no fruits. Good works, and a true faith joyn'd together complete the character of a good Chriſtian: we admire the beauty of the ſuperſtructure, when we are ſure of the firmneſs of the foundation; and we are pleas'd to ſee the tree well-laden with goodly fruit, when we are at the ſame time ſatiſfied, that there is at the root life and ſap, which will ſtill go on to fructifie. And the ſame thing may be ſaid of a good intention, and good works: it is a good intention, that muſt make our works good, and a right faith is therefore neceſſary, becauſe it regulates the intention: if either of theſe be wanting, the letter of the law may indeed be obſerv'd, but the purport of the law is not anſwer'd.

He who hath any other intention, than that of pleaſing God, and of honouring him by the obſervance of his laws, is like one that is buſie

in

moving forward, labours, ſweats, and puts himſelf quite out of breath,
t loſes his labour at laſt, becauſe he doth not aim at the right mark,
r direct his ſteps in the right way, which leads towards that place for
ich he is bound: he on the other ſide, that forms to himſelf an ima-
ary intention of glorifying God, and of hallowing his holy Name, but
h not perform ſuch actions, as bear a correſpondence to this end, is
one who is put into the right way, but is in it to no purpoſe, be-
ſe he is lazy, and doth not move one ſtep forwards. What each of
e does ſeparately, that both ought to do joyntly. He who is dili-
t in running, but takes a wrong courſe, ought to come into the
t way, and there to exert the ſame diligence: he who takes a right
rſe, and propoſes to himſelf a right end, ought to exert his utmoſt
vity in running that courſe, and to take the proper means of at-
ing that end. Neither will good works alone come up to that re-
ude, which the Goſpel requires, without a good intention; nor will
ood intention alone fulfil the terms of the Evangelical Covenant,
hout good works.

AND if ſuch a pure intention is a neceſſary and indiſpenſable branch
Evangelical righteouſneſs, then will it follow, what we in the third
e propos'd to prove, that nothing but ſuch an intention of glori-
g God by our actions can avail us to everlaſting ſalvation. For there
o attaining thoſe promiſes which the Goſpel holds forth, without
rving thoſe conditions which the Goſpel enjoyns. And if it be made
condition of everlaſting happineſs, that we ſhould do all things to
honour of God, the doing of ſuch things as God commands will not
ce in order to our obtaining the promis'd reward, unleſs we there-
do them, becauſe by our doing them his Name will be glorified. A
intention will not indeed render that, which is in it ſelf evil, good;
it will make that to be good, which is in it ſelf indifferent; and
advance a moral virtue into the dignity of a Chriſtian grace. For
al virtues and Chriſtian graces do not differ, as to the outward act
ch they produce, but as to the inward principle from which they pro-
. The ſame act of juſtice, temperance, or bounty, which perform'd
n Heathen, out of a ſenſe of decency, as agreeable to right reaſon,
uitable to the dignity of human nature, or as conducive to the pu-
k good of ſocieties, would be rank'd amongſt moral virtues, when
exercis'd by a Chriſtian, as commanded by God, as agreeable to the
eal'd Word of God, as tending to promote his honour amongſt men,
expreſſive of our deſire to approve our ſelves to him, as contributing
renew in us the image of God, and as qualifying us for the enjoy-
nt of him, hath in it the excellency, and will intitle the Chriſtian to
reward, of a Chriſtian grace.

IT was upon this account, that ſome Chriſtian Fathers have con-
mn'd the moſt virtuous actions of the Heathen, as being only a more
endid ſort of ſins; becauſe, tho' they were as to the matter of them
dable, they were directed to a wrong end, and flow'd from a wrong
nciple. *Seneca* and St. *Paul*, a Stoick Philoſopher and a Chriſtian
oſtle, may both agree in bearing evils with an undaunted mind, and
unwearied patience; but whilſt one boaſts himſelf to be by the exer-
e of ſuch heroick virtue ſuperior even to the Gods themſelves; and
e other doth not on account of his ſufferings glory in himſelf, but
cribes the glory thereof unto the Lord, and takes pleaſure in infirmi-
s, in reproaches, in neceſſities, in perſecutions, in diſtreſſes, for Chriſt's

ſake; the former hath no reaſon to complain, if having courted virtue
for its own ſake, or for the applauſe it carries with it, he reaps no higher
reward; whilſt the latter hath good grounds to hope, that having en-
dur'd tribulations with patience, that the glory thereof might redound to
2 Tim. 4. 8. God, he ſhall receive *a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteou*
judge ſhall give him at that day.

AND as this purity of intention is that which diſtinguiſhes the Chri-
ſtian from the Heathen; ſo is it alſo that which diſtinguiſhes betwee
the ſincere Chriſtian and the hypocritical pretender to Chriſtian piety.
For whereas, whatever a good and ſincere Chriſtian doth, is done, as i
ought to be, to the glory of God; the aims of an hypocrite are alway
terminated within himſelf, and are directed merely to his own glory.
If he be charitable to men, his charity is not intended for the eaſe an
relief of his poor brother, but barely for the blazoning his own goo
name, and getting a fair reputation in the world. If he be devout and
conſtant in the exerciſe of religious duties; if he be every day a fre
quenter of the publick worſhip of the Church, and neglects no opportu
nity of ſhewing himſelf at God's holy altar; tho' his prayers and his praiſe
ſeem addreſs'd to God, yet the honour is really intended to himſelf, and
he is to all intents and purpoſes his own idol. Alms given in ſecre
would be equally beneficial, and more acceptable to the receiver, a
Mat. 6. 2. well as more pleaſing in the ſight of God: but *the hypocrite* chuſes r
ther to *ſound a trumpet* to call together, not the objects, but the ſpe
ctators, of his charity; and to give alms in the open ſtreets, *that he ma*
have that *glory of men*, which is the only object he aims at, and which
he prefers to that diſtant hope, which thoſe propoſe to themſelves, who
take care *that their alms may be in ſecret, that he who ſeeth in ſecret,*
may himſelf reward them openly. A prayer offer'd up to God in th
private retirements of *the cloſet, when the doors are ſhut,* might b
heard by that God, who is preſent in all places, *and who ſeeing* what i
done *in ſecret*, is able and ready to *reward* it *openly*: but the God, who
the hypocrite worſhips, is neither omnipreſent, nor omniſcient: wh
is done within the cloſet falls not within the cognizance of men, to who
all his devotion is paid; and therefore he chuſes another oratory mo
proper to his purpoſe, and prays *in the* open *ſynagogues*, and ſuch
places, where his devotions may beſt attract the eyes, and raiſe the ad
miration of many beholders. A ſhort prayer is moſt proper to implo
the aid of God, who delighteth not in our *vain babling*, wants not to b
inform'd by our *much ſpeaking*, but *knoweth what things we have nee*
of, even *before we ask him*: but common people are wont to take th
meaſure of men's devotion from the length of their prayers; and there-
fore *a long prayer* is beſt ſuited to the *hypocrite*'s purpoſe, and is th
moſt proper grace to go before *the devouring widows houſes.* Suppli
cations can never be offer'd in ſo low and ſoft a voice, as not to be u
derſtood by him, who heareth not by the ear, but by immediate intu
tion ſearcheth into the thoughts of the heart: but becauſe the hyp
crite would have his prayers heard by thoſe whoſe attentions are be
rais'd, and beſt kept fix'd by clamour and noiſe, he therefore cries
loud, as if he were a worſhipper, not of the true God, but of *Baal;*
Deity that is aſleep, and wants to be awak'd by the noiſineſs of men
devotions. Faſting is not leſs ſubſervient to true piety, the carnal ap
petites are not leſs ſubdued thereby, it is not leſs an act of mortific
tion and ſelf-denial, tho' at the ſame time there ſhould be a ſerenity

the

countenance, and an air of joy and pleaſantneſs in the outward dreſs: t becauſe a pale, meagre, and ſullen look, and an affected negligence dreſs are by many people reckon'd ſure evidences of a mortified ſpi-, for this reaſon *the hypocrite* never fails to put on *a ſad countenance, hen he faſts,* that he may not loſe the reputation of faſting, and often ts it on merely that he may be thought to faſt. In ſhort, as alms-giving, prayer, and faſting, are by the hypocrite always ſo order'd, as to procure the applauſe of men; ſo are all his other pretendedly religious actions by him conſtantly directed to one and the ſame end: for the impeachment brought againſt them by our Saviour in the Goſpel is general, that *all their works they do for to be ſeen of men.* Mat. 23. 5.

Now our Saviour has made a reward from men for actions done to gain their eſteem, and a reward from God for the ſame actions, inconſiſtent. Which of theſe rewards we will propoſe to our ſelves, which we ſhall receive, he hath left to our own option: but he who propoſes to himſelf the former, hath no good title to, no ſhadow of reaſon to expect, the latter. Thoſe who *ſound a trumpet before the giving of alms that they may have glory of men*; thoſe who *pray in the corners of ſtreets, that they may be ſeen of men*; thoſe who, *when they faſt, disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to faſt*; thoſe who perform any other ſeemingly virtuous or religious actions, that they may gain the applauſe of men, *theſe verily have their reward*, they receive the applauſe they ſought, and becauſe they ſought it, are excluded from all hopes of *a reward from their Father, which is in heaven.* For no one can have any pretence to a recompenſe from God for any actions, but what are done becauſe of his command, for his ſake, and to his glory.

From what hath been ſaid it is plain, that whether we conſider our ſelves as reaſonable creatures, or as Chriſtians, or as candidates of heaven, we are in all theſe reſpects oblig'd to direct all our actions to God, as our ſoveraign end, and to make his glory our ultimate aim and deſign. Let us therefore act like men that have reaſon, like Chriſtians that have faith, and like the heirs of ſalvation, who are endued with *a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefil'd, and that fadeth not away, reſerv'd in heaven for them,* and them only, who imitate the excellent pattern here propos'd by our Saviour; *in whom is the ſame mind, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus* our Lord; who, like him, *ſeek not their own glory,* but *ſeek the glory of him that ſent* them into the world, and thereby approve themſelves to be truly his ſervants, and ſons, and by being inſtruments of his glory here, do entitle themſelves to be partakers of it hereafter. 1 Pet. 1. 4.

A

SERMON

PREACH'D BEFORE

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE HOUSE OF PEERS,

AT

WESTMINSTER-ABBEY,

On *Tueſday*, *May* 29, 1716.

BEING

The Day of Publick Thankſgiving to Almighty GOD,
for having put an end to the Great Rebellion, by the
Reſtitution of King CHARLES II. and the *Royal-Family*.

SERMON XVI.

Preach'd before

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

House of Peers, &c.

Psalm CXV. 1.

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's ſake.

THERE being no title to this Pſalm, which ſhould lead us into the knowledge of the Author by whom, the time when, or the occaſion upon which it was penn'd, there is room left for conjecture, but no way of arriving at a certainty, as to any of theſe points. All the light we can have therein is from the ſubject-matter of the Pſalm; but even from at it doth not evidently appear, whether it was written in a time of ublick calamity by way of ſupplication, in order to implore God's ſſing; or on occaſion of ſome publick ſucceſs, by way of thankſgiving a ſignal mercy already receiv'd. To this latter caſe it is very applible, and God be praiſed that we have ſo happy an occaſion, as this aucious day affords us, thus to apply it. The inſpired Author ſeems have had his thoughts employ'd in the contemplation of ſome publick ſſing vouchſaf'd *to the houſe of* Iſrael, *and to the houſe of* Aaron; v. 9. 10. ne late and remarkable inſtance of God's having been *their help and ir ſhield*; ſome interpoſal of the divine power in favour of his beved people, at a critical time, when there was no proſpect of human lp; a devout ſenſe of which made him break out into theſe words, ll of great humility and pious gratitude: *Not unto us, O Lord, not to us, but unto thy Name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's ke.*

I. When the Pſalmiſt denies, that the glory of thoſe mighty and wonderful ſucceſſes, wherewith God's people are at any time bleſſed, doth belong to them, he intimates, that men are apt to aſcribe the praiſe thereof to their own merits, counſels, or atchievements.

II. When he with earneſtneſs and vehemence repeats that denial, he doth by ſuch reiterated negation imply the great folly and impiety of men's thus aſcribing the glory of ſuch ſucceſſes to themſelves, or to any of the children of men.

III. When he expreſſes his deſire, that the glory thereof may be given to *God's Name*, he directs us to pay the tribute of praiſe and thankſgiving to that ſoveraign Being, to whom only of right it is due.

IV. When he requires, that this glory ſhould be given to God *for his mercy and for his truth's ſake*, he inſtructs us, that, when we receive ſuch bleſſings from the hands of God, we derive them, not from his juſtice, but from his clemency; they are not ſuch as we can of right claim, but ſuch as he, out of his unbounded goodneſs and regard to thoſe gracious promiſes, which he hath made to his Church, vouchſafes to grant.

Firſt, That men are apt to aſcribe to themſelves thoſe ſignal and glorious ſucceſſes, which are not the fruit of their own induſtry, nor the contrivances of their own policy, nor the acqueſt of their own wiſdom and ſtrength, but the free gifts of God, the gratuitous largeſſes of his overflowing bounty, and the unmerited acts of his peculiar goodneſs and favour, is evident, as from many other inſtances, ſo more eſpecially from the intolerable pride, and aſſuming temper of the *Iſraelites*, in whoſe name the Penman of this Pſalm might be the more concern'd to diſavow any ſuch invaſion of God's peculiar right, becauſe they had been in all ages notoriouſly guilty of ſuch unpardonable uſurpation. No generation of men under heaven could have more numerous, more ſenſible, more demonſtrative proofs of their dependence upon God, and their owing all the advantages they enjoy'd to his immediate providence, than the *Iſraelites* had: by his power they were firſt eſtabliſh'd, and by his protection they were conſtantly ſecur'd, in the poſſeſſion of their laws, their liberties, and all other their temporal and ſpiritual rights. In every ſtep they made from *Egypt* to the promis'd land, from the houſe of bondage to a country flowing with an abundance of all things good and deſireable in life, his power was viſibly diſplay'd, and *his arm made bare* before them: they were brought forth, they were conducted, they were fed, they were upheld, by a continued ſeries of miracles. That they might not attribute their eſcape from the bondage of *Egypt*, and the tyranny of *Pharaoh*, to their own policy and contrivance, God reſcu'd
Pſal. 78. 12. them *by a mighty hand, and a ſtretched-out arm, and in their ſight did marvellous things for their deliverance in the land of* Egypt, *even in the field of* Zoan: that they might not aſcribe their ſafe paſſage over the ſea
v. 13. to their own skill and conduct; *God divided the ſea, and caus'd them to paſs through, and he made the waters to ſtand on an heap*: that they might not imagine they found their way without any ſuperior direction
v. 14. or guidance; *in the day-time God led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire*: that they might not pretend their maintenance on the way was owing to their own care and proviſion, and the

early

rly preparations they had made for ſo long and difficult a march; *God* v. 15.
ave the rocks in the wilderneſs, and gave them drink as out of the
eat depths; he commanded the clouds from above, and opened the v. 23.
oors of heaven, and rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave
em angels food: that they might not impute the expulſion of their
emies, and the ſettlement of themſelves in the promis'd land to their
n valour and proweſs, to their military skill and conduct; *God brought* v. 54.
em to the border of his ſanctuary, even to the mountain which his
ht hand had purchaſed; he caſt out the heathen alſo before them, and
vided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Iſrael *to*
ell in their tents.

And now can we imagine any danger, any probablity, any poſſibili-
, that men thus call'd forth by the audible voice of God; thus brought
t, directed, ſuſtain'd, ſecur'd, and put into actual poſſeſſion of the
untry of their enemies by the immediate hand of God, ſhould at laſt
k upon it, not as God's donation, but their own acqueſt, and aſcribe
e glory of this miraculous expedition, theſe ſurpriſing deliverances,
ſe unparallel'd ſucceſſes, not to God, but unto themſelves? And yet
d who knows the ſecret workings of men's hearts, and how apt they
e to be infatuated with proud thoughts, and vain conceits of their own
ſdom and power, even where their weakneſs and impotence are moſt
nſpicuous, thought it neceſſary to caution that people againſt a ſin,
which it is not likely that they themſelves, before ſuch caution was
en, or perhaps even after it was given, could think it ſo much as
ible they ſhould ever be guilty. This caution we find recorded for
admonition in the like caſes: *Beware that thou forget not the Lord* Deut. 8. 11, &c.
God ---- Leſt when thou haſt eaten, and art full, and haſt built
ly houſes and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks
tiply, and thy ſilver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou haſt
multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord
God, that very Lord and God, *which brought thee forth out of the*
d of Egypt, *from the houſe of bondage —— and thou ſay in thine heart,* v. 17.
power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth.

Now if it was poſſible for that people, in thoſe circumſtances, to
ribe their wonderful ſucceſſes to their own power; if the caution
e given by God ſhews, that it was probable they would do ſo; if the
nt prov'd that they actually did ſo; then can it not be thought unlike-
, that other perſons, in different circumſtances, where the hand of God
h as certainly, but not as viſibly, interpoſe; where ſecond cauſes are
re freely left to produce their natural and uſual effects; where the
ans made uſe of do manifeſtly and confeſſedly contribute to the end
reby accompliſh'd, ſhould be lifted up with their ſucceſs, as gain'd
their own wiſdom and conduct; ſhould look upon the events which
wrought by the prudence of their counſels, or by the prevalence of
ir forces, as owing entirely to thoſe ſubordinate cauſes, to which they
not without injuſtice be denied to be in a great meaſure due; and
ſequently ſhould want to be put in mind, that altho' theſe are pro-
r inſtruments in God's hands to bring about what he hath purpos'd,
t they are ſtill but inſtruments; and that therefore thoſe who under
d have moſt contributed to the accompliſhing any great and glorious
ent, ſuch as was that we this day celebrate, the Reſtauration of our
cient government in Church and State, whether they were men of
nown for counſel, or for action, whether they exerted themſelves in

the cabinet, or in the field, ſuffer no diminution in their character, when, not out of any envy or ingratitude towards ſuch worthy Patriots, but out of a jealous concern for the honour of *God*, we declare, that *not unto them, not unto them, but to his Name the glory thereof ought to be given, for his mercy and for his truth's ſake.* We ought to be the more cautious of thus aſcribing to our ſelves, or to the ſons of men, the glory of thoſe ſucceſſes, which are due only to God, becauſe, as the prohibition of the Pſalmiſt intimates that men are very apt thus to proceed, ſo in the

Second PLACE, by the vehemence and earneſtneſs with which he repeats that prohibition, *not unto us, not unto us,* he expreſſes the gre folly and impiety of ſuch procedure.

To give that glory to any other Being beſides God, which is due only to God, is the proper notion of idolatry; and therefore, whether w fall down before an image, or in the pride of our hearts arrogate divine honours to our ſelves; whether the idol we worſhip be the work of our hands, or the creature of our imaginations, we are in both caſes equall idolatrous. For idolatry doth not properly, much leſs ſolely, confi in the outward expreſſions of honour, but in the inward ſentiment he, who aſcribes to the creature thoſe perfections which are peculia to the Creator; he, who aſſumes to himſelf, or attributes to other men the honour of accompliſhing thoſe events, which God only doth, God only can accompliſh, pays unto man divine worſhip, tho' he doth not bow the knee to him, or fall down proſtrate before him. Hence is it that impious and irreligious perſons, who have inſolently claim'd t themſelves the honour of thoſe great events, which God hath wrough by their hands, have in a very exemplary and remarkable manner been puniſh'd by the Almighty for the invaſion of his peculiar and unalienable rights. Such was the pride and arrogance of the King of *Aſſyri* who, becauſe God had made uſe of him as a ſcourge to chaſtiſe a ſinf and diſobedient people, was lifted up in his heart, and inſolently boaſted
Iſai. 10. 13. of his conqueſts as gain'd entirely by his own irreſiſtible power. F *he ſaid, by the ſtrength of my hand I have done it; and by my wiſdo for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, an have robbed their treaſures, and I have put down the inhabitan like a valiant man.* Righteous is the judgment of God, who, in orde to convince ſuch bold pretenders of their unſufferable impiety and folly hath made them feel the terrible effects of that divine power, whic they affected to rival, and hath forc'd them to acknowledge the frailty of their mortal natures, by levelling them with the very loweſt of men and bringing them back to that duſt, out of which his almighty han
c. 13. 11. at firſt raiſed them. Such was the fate of this haughty *Aſſyrian, whe the Lord broke the ſtaff of his power, and cauſed the arrogancy of th proud man to ceaſe, and laid low the haughtineſs of this once terrib one.* Then did thoſe, over whom he had inſulted, whilſt he was in hi grandeur, triumph over him in the day of his abaſement, ſpeaking an
c. 14. 10, &c. ſaying unto him: *Art thou alſo become weak as we? Art thou becom like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down unto the grave; the worm i ſpread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fall from heaven,* O Lucifer, *ſon of the morning? How art thou cut dow to the ground, which didſt weaken the nations? Is this the ma that made the earth tremble, that did ſhake kingdoms?* If we wou keep at the utmoſt diſtance from feeling the like ſtrokes of divine ve

ance, it will behove us to keep at an equal diſtance from any the leaſt
proaches towards the like preſumption and arrogance, and not only
hearken to the repeated prohibition of the Pſalmiſt in not aſcribing
e honour of ſuch glorious ſucceſſes to men, but alſo, in the
Third PLACE, to obey his injunction in giving the glory thereof to
od.

THERE is no doctrine more frequently, or more plainly deliver'd
the Word of God, none, of which we, who profeſs to believe that
ord, ought to be more throughly perſwaded, than that all things are
vern'd by a wiſe and over-ruling Providence; that thoſe events, in
accompliſhment of which the abilities of men eminent for prudence,
urage, or any other commendable quality, do moſt manifeſtly ſhine
th, and moſt deſervedly gain publick admiration and applauſe, are
brought about without the concurrence of a ſtill ſuperior wiſdom,
power; that be there never ſo much foreſight and counſel in the
ming of a deſign, never ſo much ſteadineſs and application in the car-
ng it on, never ſo much vigour and activity in the execution of it,
, if God be againſt it, if he be not for it, it cannot have the deſired
ceſs, it muſt of neceſſity miſcarry; that therefore when we under-
e any enterpriſe of great weight and moment, and eſpecially in affairs,
ere the publick ſafety and welfare are concern'd, we ought in the firſt
e to apply our ſelves unto God by prayers and ſupplications for his
ſtance and bleſſing; and that if our hopes are anſwer'd, and much
re if they are exceeded; if all that we asked of God is granted, and
ter mercies, than we durſt preſume to ask, are beſtow'd; if the
ns by us employ'd are by his powerful concurrence rendred effectual
attaining the deſired end, we ought to give him the glory, and ren-
unto him our moſt ſolemn praiſes and thankſgivings. It is neceſ-
, that we ſhould have this firm perſwaſion and lively ſenſe of God's
ng the Beſtower, as of every good gift, ſo particularly of all publick
national bleſſings, that we may have an adequate value of the mer-
receiv'd; that we may be juſt to the merits of thoſe, by whoſe hands
d is pleaſed to convey it to us; and that we may not ſtop at them,
in our thoughts may riſe up to him, who is the original ſource and
-ſpring of all thoſe bleſſings, which like a plentiful ſtream do over-
w and enrich a nation.

HOW great and ſignal ſoever any temporal bleſſing may be, how-
ver conſiderable in it ſelf, and fruitful of happy effects, which may
ſonably be expected to follow from it; how terrible ſoever the dan-
, which by it is eſcaped; and how valuable ſoever the advantages,
ich are thereby gain'd; it can never be ſo great in any of theſe re-
rds, as it is in conſideration of God the Beſtower of it. For no en-
ment on this ſide heaven can equal this comfortable aſſurance, that
Preſerver of men careth for us, that *the Lord of all things delighteth*
do us good. That which adds the greateſt price to any national mer-
is, that it bears the ſignature of heaven, and is ſent us as a ſure to-
of the divine favour. In order therefore to form a right eſtimate of
worth, we muſt *lift up our eyes to the hills, from whence cometh our*
lp; and our joy will then be full, when we conſider *that our help com-*
from the Lord which made heaven and earth.

AND as this reflection will give us juſt ſentiments of the valuableneſs
the mercy beſtow'd; ſo will it raiſe in us a ſuitable veneration for
oſe worthy Patriots, whom God is pleas'd to pitch upon to miniſter

to his providence in the conveyance of his bleſſings to the ſons of men. For what can ſo much diſtinguiſh or dignifie any mortal man, what can raiſe him to ſo great an height and pre-eminence above others, what can add ſo bright a luſtre to his name, as to be an inſtrument in God's hand; one whom he chooſeth out of the reſt of mankind, to bring about his great and glorious purpoſes; by whoſe courage or conduct he delights to convey deliverances and mercies to his Church, and to a choſen people? Be his fame never ſo far ſpread by the renown of his actions, be his title never ſo noble by the dignity of his rank, be his intereſt never ſo great in the affections of the people, or in the favour of his prince; yet all theſe honours are but mean and contemptible in compariſon of that much greater glory, which redounds to ſuch an one from his being, as it were, an angel of God, by whom he diſpenſeth his bleſſings to the ſons of men. Great things are ſaid of *Naaman* in 2 Kings. 5. 1. the holy ſtory, that he was *Captain of the hoſt of the King of* Syria; that *he was a great man with his maſter, and honourable*; but the finiſhing ſtroke of his character is this, that *by him the Lord had given deliverance unto* Syria.

AND as this ſenſe of God's being the Beſtower of every national bleſſing is thus neceſſary to heighten our opinion of the mercy beſtow'd and to increaſe our eſteem for the perſons thro' whoſe hand it is convey'd unto us; ſo is it to be deeply imprinted on our minds, for this reaſon above all others, that we may not be unthankful to him, who is ſo watchful over us, and ſo beneficial to us: that diſcerning his hand in his own work we may with our lips, and from our hearts, uſe thoſe emphatical words of the Pſalmiſt, *to thee, O Lord, do we give thanks, yea to thee do we give thanks.* And this we are the more ſtrongly obliged to becauſe, according to our

Fourth OBSERVATION from the words of the text, when we receive ſuch bleſſings from the hands of God, we derive them not from his juſtice, but from his clemency; they are not ſuch, as we can of right claim, but ſuch as God, out of his unbounded goodneſs to his ſervants, and in regard to thoſe gracious promiſes, which he hath made to his Church, vouchſafes to grant.

WE have before obſerv'd, how apt the *Jews* were to aſcribe unto themſelves the honour of thoſe performances, which were truly owing to God's immediate power; and how, when by a remonſtrance of the abſurdity of that pretence they were driven from a plea ſo impoſſible to be ſupported, they then fled to another equally unjuſtifiable; and being forced to acknowledge the interpoſition of God in their behalf, accounted for his peculiar favour towards them from their extraordinary merits above all other people and nations. And therefore we find that *Moſes* took as much pains to confute this fond notion of their extraordinary deſerts, as he did to explode the former concerning ther ſelf-ſufficiency. That they might not falſly aſcribe the victory they ſhould gain over their enemies, and the ſettlement they ſhould make in a fruitful and pleaſant land, to their own courage or conduct, he tells them, by whoſe Deut. 9. 1, &c. power this ſhould be accompliſhed; *Hear*, O Iſrael, *thou art to paſs over* Jordan *this day, to go in to poſſeſs nations greater and mightier than thy ſelf, cities great and fenced up to heaven ---- Underſtand therefore this day, that the Lord thy God is he, which goeth over before thee, as a conſuming fire; he ſhall deſtroy them, and he ſhall bring them down before thy face: ſo ſhalt thou drive them out, and deſtroy them quickly,*

as the Lord hath ſaid unto thee. And that they might not aſcribe
is interpoſal of the divine power for the ſpeedy deſtruction of their
emies to their own piety or virtue, he farther warns them againſt
is vain preſumption: *Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord* Deut. 9.4.
God hath caſt them out from before thee, ſaying, For my righteouſ-
ſs the Lord hath brought me in to poſſeſs this land ---- Not for thy v. 5,6.
hteouſneſs, or for the uprightneſs of thine heart doſt thou go to poſſeſs
ir land ---- the Lord giveth thee not this good land for thy righteouſ-
ſs, for thou art a ſtiff-necked people. In order to imprint in their
nds a deep and lively ſenſe of this their great unworthineſs, and to
preſs all proud thoughts, which might ariſe in their breaſts concern-
their imaginary title to God's favour, he there goes on with a great
l of plainneſs and force to recapitulate to them their numerous and
nous ſins; ſins of the ſame gigantick and enormous ſize, as were thoſe
s of *Anak* that they were to ſubdue; ſins ſufficient to have forfeited
love of God, and to have expos'd them to the ſame deſtruction,
ich he brought upon their enemies, had not his regard to his own
our, and his concern to maintain the truth of his promiſes, prevail'd
h him to continue his protection to that Church, which his own
t hand had planted. This was the only plea, which their power-
Interceſſor *Moſes* could make to God in their behalf: *O Lord God,* v. 26, 27.
ſtroy not thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou haſt redeemed
ough thy greatneſs, which thou haſt brought forth out of Egypt *with*
ighty hand: remember thy ſervants Abraham, Iſaac, *and* Jacob;
not unto the ſtubbornneſs of this people, nor to their wickedneſs, nor
to their ſin ---- They are thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou v. 29.
ghteſt out by thy mighty power, and by thy ſtretched-out arm.

THAT we of this Church and Nation, which were once overwhelm'd
with irreligion and anarchy, do now again enjoy the free exerciſe of
holy Religion, and our ancient conſtitution of civil government;
t we are here met together to render unto God the tribute of praiſe
thankſgiving, for the ſignal and wonderful deliverances, by his wiſe
good providence, as upon this day vouchſaf'd to prince and people,
Church and State, and to all orders and degrees of men in both; that
bleſſings by the divine goodneſs then conferr'd on our fore-fathers
ſtill continu'd to us, and that we have a proſpect of their being de-
'd to our poſterity, is confeſſedly owing, not to any great degree of
tue and holineſs, for which we have been more eminent than other
ions, not to any leſs degree of vice, or lower meaſures of iniquity
be found among us, than other people have been guilty of; but to
truth and purity of that holy faith, which we profeſs, and to God's
gular love and favour to his Church; who having *brought his vine* Pſal. 80. 8, 9.
of Egypt, *and planted it* amongſt us; *having prepared room for it,*
cauſed it to take deep root; having ſent out its boughs unto the ſea, v. 11.
its branches unto the river, tho', in his juſt indignation againſt the
of his people, he for ſome time ſuffer'd *the boar out of the wood* v. 13.
waſte it, and the wild beaſts of the foreſt to devour it; yet in the
wels of his mercy was pleas'd once more to *look down from heaven,* v. 14.
graciouſly to *behold, viſit,,* and cheriſh *this vine, which his own* v. 15.
ht hand had planted, and that branch which he had made ſo ſtrong
himſelf.

WHAT the deplorable condition of this diſtracted Kingdom was, as
Religion, after the overthrow, and before the reſtitution of the Church,

I ſhall chuſe to repreſent, not from the relation of the friends of epi
ſcopacy, who may be thought partial judges in this cauſe, but from the
confeſſion of thoſe, who had been moſt active and forward in the ex
tirpation of it; from whom we have this remarkable complaint.

——"When we look upon the preſent rueful, deplorable, and de
"formed face of the affairs of Religion, as they ſtand at this day, ou
"ſpirits are amaz'd, our hearts are overwhelm'd, our words are ſwal-
"low'd up. How ſhall we ſpeak? How ſhall we hold our peace? An
"yet where ſhall we pour out our complaint? —— Inſtead of an eſt
"bliſhment of faith and truth, we ſwarm with noiſome errors, here
"ſies, and blaſphemies; inſtead of unity and uniformity in matters of Re
"ligion, we are torn in pieces with deſtructive ſchiſms, ſeparations, di
"viſions, and ſubdiviſions; inſtead of true piety and the power of godli
"neſs, we have open'd the very flood-gates to all impiety and prophan
"neſs; inſtead of ſubmitting to the government of Chriſt, we walk i
"a Chriſtleſs looſeneſs and licentiouſneſs; inſtead of a *Reformation*, w
"may ſay with ſighs, what our enemies heretofore ſaid of us with ſcor
"we have a *Deformation* in Religion.*

NOW if this was the ſtate of Religion amongſt us, after the dow
fall of the Church, our adverſaries themſelves who had pull'd it dow
being judges, as we cannot but aſcribe the reſtitution of the Monarch
to the interpoſal of divine power, ſo may we with good reaſon believ
that God did the rather vouchſafe to exert his power in reſtoring th
ancient government of the State, becauſe, together with that, the pri
mitive and apoſtolical government of the Church, the profeſſion
Chriſt's true Religion, and the honour of his holy Name, were, by
wonderful complication of mercies, at the ſame time re-eſtabliſh'd. Fo
we ſhall form a very narrow and inadequate notion of the deliveranc
which we this day commemorate, if we confine our thoughts whol
and ſingly to the Reſtauration of an exil'd Prince, and do not farthe
extend our view to thoſe ſeveral circumſtances which attended, and fol-
low'd that event, and which exceedingly improv'd, if they did not
tirely conſtitute, the bleſſing.

THE Prince, whoſe happy Birth, and joyful Reſtauration we now
lebrate, as he was the undoubted Heir of theſe kingdoms, and ackno
ledged to be ſo by thoſe execrable traytors who murder'd the fathe
and diſinherited the ſon; ſo was he from his infancy bred up in the pri
ciples of the reform'd Church of *England*, under the influences of h
royal Father, who was a zealous Defender of our faith, had long ſuffer'd
a pious Confeſſor, and at laſt died as a glorious Martyr for it: in this R
ligion his Father had, amongſt his laſt dying commands, ſtrictly charg
him to perſevere; as thinking "his fixedneſs therein would be neceſſa
"for his ſoul, and the peace of his kingdoms, when God ſhould bri
"him to them": in the profeſſion of this faith, if any credit may be giv
either to his own ſolemn declaration, or to the recognition of his peop
he continued, during his exile, ſtedfaſt and † unſhaken: he did not

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* *A Teſtimony to the truth of Jeſus Chriſt, and to our ſolemn League and Covenant,* a
againſt the errours, hereſies, and blaſpemies of theſe times, and the toleration of them.
ſcribed by the miniſters of Chriſt within the province of London, *Dec.* 14. 1647.

† If you deſire the advancement and propagation of the proteſtant Religion, we h
by our conſtant profeſſion and practice of it, given ſufficient teſtimony to the w
that neither the unkindneſs of thoſe of the ſame faith towards us, nor the civili
and obligations from thoſe of a contrary profeſſion, could in the leaſt degree ſtartle

eſs more ſolicitude for recovering his own regal power and dignity, an for the *"preſervation of the proteſtant Religion, the privileges of Parliament, the liberty and property of the ſubject, and the fundamental Laws of the land": theſe valuable bleſſings were ſtill enhanced in their ice, as being obtain'd † without the leaſt oppoſition or effuſion of blood, rough the unanimous, cordial, and loyal votes of the Lords and Comns in Parliament aſſembled, and the paſſionate deſires of all other his jeſty's ſubjects. All theſe circumſtances were wiſely conſider'd by Legiſlature, when they appointed this day, which the Lord himſelf crowned with ſo many national bleſſings, and ſignal deliverances, to kept in perpetual remembrance throughout all generations to come; the ſame therefore muſt be taken into our conſideration, if we uld celebrate this joyful feſtival in ſuch a manner, and with ſuch ws, as authority hath directed. For had there been a coincidence other circumſtances of a nature very different from, or directly opite to, thoſe which we have obſerv'd; had that Prince from his incy been bred up in the ſuperſtitions and idolatry of the Church of *me*; had he been ſtrongly perſwaded, that there was no poſſibility of ſalvation to thoſe who were out of that Church, and very ſlender hopes thoſe who were in the communion of it, unleſs they did exert all ir power in reducing others to it; had there been no probable view his acceſſion to the throne, without ſhedding much Chriſtian blood, without the total ſubverſion of all the religious and civil rights of a t and numerous people; his Reſtauration in ſuch circumſtances ht have been a greater miracle, but certainly it would not have ſo valuable a bleſſing; it might by devout and well-prepar'd Chriſtians have been ſubmitted to, when no longer to be avoided, as all the diſpenſations of providence ought to be, with patience and reſignation; but it could ſcarcely by any tender and affectionate lovers of their Church and Country have been made an object of their wiſhes, of their prayers, of their endeavours; the day, on which it had been accompliſh'd, uld probably thro' all ſucceeding ages have been remembred, but certainly, as this happy day is, with joy and delight, with publick iſes and thankſgivings.

Y our preſence in this holy place, and bearing our part in the feſtival devotions of this day, we have declar'd it to be our ſenſe, that deliverance, which we now commemorate, by whatever ſubordinate means it was brought about, was the work of God; to whom there- e we have offer'd an oblation of praiſe and thankſgiving, with aprance of great gladneſs. Whether the addreſſes we have now made the throne of grace have ſprung from an inward and vital ſenſe of d's great mercies to us, or whether we have been offering a ſacrifice to him without an heart, which hath always been look'd upon as

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make us ſwerve from it —— *The King's letter to the Houſe of Commons*, Clar. *Hiſt. Vol. p.* 582.

Ve have yet more cauſe to enlarge our praiſe, and our prayers to God for your jeſty, that you have continued unſhaken in your faith; that neither the temptation llurements, perſwaſions and promiſes from ſeducing Papiſts on the one hand, nor perſecution and hard uſage from ſome ſeduced, and miſguided Profeſſours of the teſtant Religion on the other hand, could at all prevail on your Majeſty, to make forſake the Rock of *Iſrael*, the God of your Fathers, and the true proteſtant Relion, in which you were bred. *Ibid. p.* 593.

* Vid. *King's letter to the General and the Army.* Ibid. *p.* 579.

† Vid. *Act of Parliament*, 12 Car. II, *c.* 14.

inauſpicious and ill-boding, will beſt appear by the future conduct of our lives and actions. If we ſhall with conſtancy and perſeverance render unto the "divine Majeſty that holy obedience in thought, word, and "deed", which we have this day ſolemnly vowed; if we ſhall faithfully pay "all that loyal and dutiful allegiance to God's anointed Servant now "ſet over us, and to his Heirs after him", which we have in the office of this day religiouſly promiſ'd; if we ſhall in our ſeveral ſtations, and according to our ſeveral capacities, be careful to preſerve that excellent conſtitution in Church and State, which was this day reſtor'd, whole and intire in all its parts; and be ſtrictly upon our guard againſt any innovations, which, as woful experience hath taught us, may gradually lead to its total diſſolution; then ſhall we in the beſt and moſt acceptable manner expreſs our unfeigned gratitude to God for the great mercies on this day vouchſaf'd to our fore-fathers; then may we with full aſſurance hope, that the ſame bleſſings will by the ſame divine goodneſs be perpetuated to us, and to our lateſt poſterity.

SERMON XVII.

Truſt in God our beſt ſupport in all our troubles and afflictions.

PSAL. XLII. 11.

Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul? And why art thou diſquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I ſhall yet praiſe him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

THE inſpir'd Penman of this Pſalm was, when he wrote it, in a very ſad, melancholy, and diſconſolate ſtate: whether it was compos'd by *David*, when driven into exile by the tyranny of *Saul*, or the rebellion of *Abſalom*; or whether it be the complaint of ſome other unhappy ſoul, groaning under the captivity of *Babylon*, plain it is, that the Writer of it was under great dejection of mind: his condition was the more wretched, becauſe he had faln from a ſtate of great proſperity to a ſtate of extreme miſery: he had in a very plentiful manner enjoy'd thoſe leſſings, of which he was now unhappily depriv'd; and a review of his rmer happineſs made the ſenſe of his preſent grievances more bitter d afflictive. Whilſt he was an inhabitant of *Jeruſalem*, and liv'd in e neighbourhood of *Sion*, he had with great alacrity frequented the aces of God's publick worſhip; he *went to the houſe of God, with e voice of joy and praiſe, with a multitude that kept holy-day.* v. 4. But oſe bleſſed opportunities of treading the courts of God, and of worſhipping him in the aſſembly of his ſaints, were now wholly denied to m; no joyful feſtivals were any longer to be celebrated; each day as a day of mourning and humiliation, to be ſpent in bitter complaints his wretched and forlorn condition, and in holy pantings and breathgs after the reſtauration of thoſe bleſſings, of which he was at preſent epriv'd: *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, ſo panteth my ul after thee, O God: my ſoul thirſteth for God, for the living God; hen ſhall I come and appear before God?* v. 1, 2. Whilſt a mercy, which he ſo mightily valu'd, which he had formerly with ſo much ſatisfaction enjoy'd, and for which he now ſo impatiently long'd, was for ſome time v. 3. 4. deferr'd, his ſorrows were exceedingly enlarg'd; *tears were his meat day and night*, and in the agony of grief *he pour'd out his ſoul within him.* In this dejected and perplex'd ſtate he is ſometimes ready to deſpond, and to ſink under that weight, which preſs'd ſo heavily upon him; but he ſtill ſtruggles with his grief; he is not willing that it ſhould get the abſolute maſtery over him; but, in order to rouſe his ſpirits and to reanimate his drooping courage, he thus expoſtulates with himſelf, *Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul? And why art thou diſquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I ſhall yet praiſe him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* In which words are contain'd this comfortable doctrine, that in all our troubles, be they never ſo great, under all diſturbances of mind, from whence ſoever they ariſe, a firm truſt in God is our beſt ſupport.

INNUMERABLE are the evils, to which we are ſubject in this life, from which neither the wiſdom of the moſt prudent, nor the riches of the moſt wealthy, nor the forces of the moſt powerful, nor even the virtue of the moſt innocent can always ſecure them. Even truſt in God it ſelf, which is the beſt remedy againſt all evils, will not always ſecure us from afflictions, with which God is pleas'd ſometimes to viſit his moſt faithful ſervants for the trial of their patience, for the exerciſe of their graces, and for the encreaſe of their glory. When therefore truſt in God is here preſcrib'd as a remedy againſt dejection of mind under thoſe evils, which we actually ſuffer, or againſt diſquiet thoughts ariſing from the apprehenſion of evils, which are like to befal us, we muſt not flatter our ſelves, that by placing our confidence in him we ſhall certainly and conſtantly be deliver'd from all thoſe calamities, which we feel or fear; it is argument enough for our truſting in him, that by ſo doing we ſhall either be freed from them, or ſupported under them; they ſhall either be quite remov'd, or elſe be made tolerable to us; either the thorn ſhall depart from us, or its ſharpneſs ſhall be blunted, and its pungency abated. Now for ſuch a truſt in God as this, we have firm grounds, on which it may be built,

I. FROM the attributes of God, which enable and diſpoſe him to help us.

II. FROM the examples of thoſe, who have thus put their truſt in him, and have found help in the time of need.

III. FROM the experience we our ſelves have had of God's *loving* kindneſs to us, which ſhould encourage us ſtill to put our *truſt* in him.

AND *Firſt*, We have firm grounds for our truſt in God from thoſe attributes of God, which enable and diſpoſe him to help us.

WE can no where ſecurely place our confidence, we can no where with any infallible certainty depend on any one for help, but where we are ſure that he on whom we depend is cloath'd with ſufficient power, ſo that he is able to help us if he pleaſes; that he is gracious and beneficent, ſo as to be willing to reach out unto us that help which he is able to afford; and that if he has given us any promiſes of aſſiſtance, he is faithful and true, ſo that we may ſafely rely on thoſe promiſes. For, be our friend and patron, on whom we depend, never ſo well-in-

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clin'd towards us, yet if he be weak and deſtitute of power to remove that evil which we ſuffer, or to procure us that good which we want, we may indeed be oblig'd to him for his good-will, but we can receive no benefit from it, for lack of his ability to accompliſh his gracious purpoſes towards us; or be his power to aſſiſt us never ſo great, be he never ſo able to deliver us from thoſe calamities, under which we labour, or to beſtow upon us thoſe advantages, which we ſtand in need of, it is no comfort to us that he can do what we have no reaſon to expect that he will do for us; or tho' he ſhould have been ſo kind as freely to have promis'd us, what he is able alſo to perform, yet unleſs he be of unqueſtionable veracity, we may find our ſelves miſerably diſappointed by relying on ſuch promiſes, which will never be made good to us. But when we place our truſt in God, we run none of theſe riſques; becauſe there is nothing which infinite power cannot accompliſh; nothing fit and expedient for us, which infinite goodneſs is not diſpos'd to grant; no promiſes of help can have been made us by a God of truth and holineſs, which will not be exactly and punctually fulfill'd.

When therefore the Pſalmiſt would expreſs the firmneſs of that truſt, which he had in God, we find him ſometimes extolling his power, at other times magnifying his goodneſs, and often alſo mentioning his veracity, and building his hopes on theſe ſeveral grounds, as upon ſo many ſtrong foundations, which could not poſſibly be remov'd. There is nothing which either nature has made, or art has contriv'd in ſuch a manner as may beſt ſerve for our defence, from which the Pſalmiſt doth not borrow alluſions in order to excite in his own mind, and in the mind of others, a lively ſenſe of the mighty power of God to defend his ſervants in the needful time of trouble. *The Lord is my rock, and my fortreſs, and my deliverer; my God, my ſtrength in whom I will truſt, my buckler, and the horn alſo of my ſalvation, and my high tower.* Pſal. 18 2. When he conſider'd the number and the power of thoſe enemies, with whom he was to grapple, he had reaſon to be diffident of himſelf; but when he contemplated the far ſuperior ſtrength of his aſſiſtant, all his fears were immediately diſcarded: *The Lord is my light, and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? The Lord is the ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid?* Pſal. 27. 1. *Tho' an hoſt ſhould encamp againſt me, my heart ſhall not fear; tho' war ſhould riſe againſt me, in this will I be confident.* v. 3. Having God on his ſide, he look'd upon himſelf to be an over-match to the united powers of the whole univerſe; *All nations compaſs'd me about, but the name of the Lord will I deſtroy them.* Pſal. 118. 10. This his confidence he reats in a very triumphing manner, *They compaſs'd me about, yea, they mpaſs'd me about; but in the name of the Lord I will deſtroy them.* v. 11. firm a reliance had he on God's power and aſſiſtance, that before he gag'd his enemies he ſpoke of victory as already gain'd; *They comſs'd me about like bees, they are quench'd as the fire of thorns: for the name of the Lord I will deſtroy them.* v. 12.

Nor did he think the power of God leſs mighty to relieve him in other difficulties, than it was to ſecure him againſt the violence of enemies. There was no calamity of any kind, from which he did t expect deliverance, or under which he did not promiſe himſelf ſupport thro' the protection of the Almighty. This his reliance on d for ſecurity in all the dangers and diſtreſſes, to which weak mors are ſubject, is elegantly ſet forth to us in the 91ſt Pſalm. An unirſal declaration of the ſafety of all thoſe who truſt in God is firſt made

by one of the perſons, who in that Pſalm are introduc'd as treating of
God's mighty power diſplay'd in the protection of his faithful ſervants:
Pſal. 91. v. 1. *He that dwelleth in the ſecret place of the moſt High, ſhall abide* (or
ſhall be ſecure) *under the ſhadow of the Almighty.* The perſon who
had heard this declaration gladly catches hold of it, and with great alacrity
v. 2. of ſpirit, replies, *I will ſay of the Lord, he is my refuge, and my
fortreſs; my God, in him will I truſt.* And then to ſhew, that this
truſt was not miſplac'd, the ſame perſon, who had at firſt aſſerted in general
terms the happineſs and ſafety of all thoſe, who put their truſt in
God, applies this general doctrine to the particular caſe of him who had
v. 3. ſo frankly expreſs'd his great confidence in the Almighty; *Surely he ſhall
deliver thee from the ſnare of the fowler, and from the noiſom peſtilence.*
v. 9, &c. *Becauſe thou haſt made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the moſt
High, thy habitation; there ſhall no evil befall thee, neither ſhall any
plague come nigh thy dwelling; for he ſhall give his angels charge over
thee, to keep thee in all thy ways: they ſhall bear thee up in their hands,
leſt thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone. Thou ſhalt tread upon the lion,
and adder; the young lion and dragon ſhalt thou trample under feet.*
Theſe aſſurances of God's readineſs to guard him againſt all evils were
ſufficient to keep up his ſpirits under all the exigences of life; but for
the farther animating his courage, and ſtrengthning his hopes, God himſelf
is in the cloſe of that conſolatory Pſalm introduc'd thus ſpeaking:
v. 14, &c. *Becauſe he hath ſet his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I
will ſet him on high becauſe he hath known my name: he ſhall call upon
me, and I will anſwer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver
him and honour him. With long life will I ſatisfie him, and ſhew
him my ſalvation.* I have choſen to ſet forth the power of God to aſſiſt
his people in the midſt of all their dangers and diſtreſſes, chiefly in
the words of the Pſalmiſt, becauſe there are no expreſſions better ſuited
to convey into the minds of all hearers right notions of this power;
none that lie more level to the capacities of ordinary underſtandings;
and yet none that perſons of more exalted knowledge can be more taken
with, than thoſe which have been borrow'd from this devout Prophet,
by whom the Spirit of the Lord ſpake, and in his own tongue was the
Word of God himſelf.

But in order to our placing all our hopes in God, it is not enough
that we ſhould have exalted notions of his power, but we muſt alſo entertain
undoubted aſſurance of his goodneſs, and readineſs to ſave us.
And that we may entertain no doubts thereof, the ſame Pſalmiſt which
hath furniſh'd us with ſo many declarations of his almighty power, dot
afford us alſo as plain teſtimonies of his unbounded goodneſs toward
thoſe who put their truſt in him: *The Lord is good, and doth good*
he is eſſentially and immutably good; and his goodneſs, which is per-
petually immanent in his nature, doth conſtantly iſſue forth in ſtream
of bounty towards his creatures; as he is good, ſo alſo he doth good
Pſal. 145. 9. Nor is this his goodneſs limited to ſome few, but extended to all: *H
is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.* Nor
this his goodneſs temporary, ſo that tho' at ſome times we might hope
Pſal. 52: 1. to experience it, yet at other times we ſhould deſpair thereof: *For the
goodneſs of God endureth continually.* Thoſe who have taken moſt care
to approve themſelves unto God by the ſanctity of their lives, have the
greateſt encouragement to depend on his goodneſs to them: For ſu
Pſal. 21. 3. as theſe *he preventeth with the bleſſings of goodneſs, and no good thing*

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ill be withhold from them that walk uprightly. But neither have the Pſal. 84. 11. reateſt ſinners any reaſon utterly to deſpond, if they do repent of their ns, and return unto God; *for thou, Lord, art good, and ready to for-* Pſal. 86. 5. *ve; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.*

SUCH being the goodneſs of God, to his nature ſo eſſential, in its xerciſe ſo free, in its meaſure ſo ample, in its objects ſo extenſive, in s continuance ſo laſting, we may upon this, as upon another ſtrong illar, that will ſurely bear all the weight that can be laid upon it, ſecurely build our truſt in God. But that our confidence in him may be ill the ſtronger, we have alſo the ſure promiſes of God, wherewith to rtifie our hopes. And indeed theſe are at laſt the very beſt grounds at we have to ſupport in us a regular and rational truſt; for truſt doth n the very notion of it ſuppoſe an antecedent promiſe. We may deſire, e may expect, we may hope for unpromis'd favours; but we can be in- llibly ſure of no bleſſings, but what God has in his Word graciouſly pro- is'd; and, according as his promiſes are either abſolute or conditional, o muſt our expectations be, if we would have them never diſappointed. What he has no where promis'd, that we may not flatter our ſelves ith the hopes of receiving; what he has promis'd to ſome perſons ſo nd ſo qualified, upon ſuch and ſuch terms, that we may not raſhly preſume will be our lot, unleſs we have the qualifications requir'd, unleſs e comply with the terms inſiſted on; but where the promiſes are ge- eral, ſo that none are excluded, or where we have fulfill'd the conditions, ſo that we in particular are not ſhut out, there we cannot be too ſanguine in our hopes.

NOW there are very expreſs promiſes of help to thoſe which are ighteous, and which put their truſt in God; and on theſe promiſes all, whoſe conſciences bear them teſtimony that they are righteous, and that hey do place their whole confidence in him, may ſecurely rely. *The* Pſal. 34. 15. *yes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their y. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out* v. 17. *their troubles. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord* v. 19. *elivereth him out of them all. The Lord redeemeth the ſoul of his* v. 22. *ervants, and none of them that truſt in him ſhall be deſolate. They hat truſt in the Lord ſhall be as mount Zion, which cannot be remov'd,* Pſal. 125. 1, 2. *ut abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about* Jeruſalem, *ſo he Lord is round about his people, from henceforth even for ever.* Hav- ng therefore theſe gracious promiſes, we may with undaunted courage peak the words, and take up the reſolutions of the Pſalmiſt; *God is* Pſal. 46. 1, 2, 3. *ur refuge and ſtrength, a very preſent help in trouble. Therefore will e not fear, tho' the earth be remov'd, and tho' the mountains be car- ied into the midſt of the ſea: Tho' the waters thereof roar and be roubled; tho' the mountains ſhake with the ſwelling thereof. The Lord hoſts is with us, the God of* Jacob *is our refuge.* Such boaſtings as heſe of a fearleſs ſoul we meet with ſometimes, as utter'd by brave and allant men among the Heathens; but what was vain and extravagant anting in the mouths of ſuch, who had no ſtrength but their own to ear them up, no proſpect of any other recompenſe, than that of an maginary fame for behaving themſelves under difficulties with magna- imity and decency; that, when ſpoken by one, who has the aid of God to ſupport him under ſufferings, and the promiſes of God to reward his patience, and courage, and affiance, either with the bleſſings f this life, or with the glories of the next, is a wiſe, ſolid, and well-weigh'd reſolution. Thus have I ſhewn how we may from the attributes of God, which enable and diſpoſe him to help us, draw ſtrong and irrefragable arguments, why in all our troubles and diſtreſſes we ſhould put our truſt in him. For the ſtrengthning of which truſt, it will be proper for us, in the

Second PLACE, to have an eye to the examples of thoſe who have thus plac'd their truſt in God, and have found help in the time of need.

NOW out of the many bright patterns of this kind, with which the ſacred Hiſtory abounds, I ſhall ſelect out only one, becauſe that one is in the Scriptures themſelves expreſly propos'd to us as a pattern. Wonderful is that inſtance of an unſhaken confidence in God, which is diſplay'd for our inſtruction, and recorded for our imitation, in the hiſtory of the ſufferings, and of the patience of *Job*. He ſaw himſelf at once ſtript of all the comforts and of all the neceſſaries of life; reduc'd from a ſtate of great plenty and abundance to extreme want, and bereft of a numerous family of children, all ſnatch'd away at once by a violent and untimely death: the enemy of mankind having permiſſion from God to ſhoot his arrows againſt him, emptied upon him his whole quiver; but whilſt he was arm'd with truſt in God, as with a ſtrong ſhield of defence, they could none of them pierce his heart, but were beat back without doing him any hurt, as having no power over one, whom a firm reliance on the divine power and goodneſs had made invulnerable. What one circumſtance was there in his ſufferings, that did not add to their weight, and ſeem to make the burden of them utterly inſupportable? How ſenſibly, for inſtance, are tender parents wont to be afflicted with the loſs of one beloved child? How is their grief heightned, if this child be haſtily ſnatch'd away with a ſudden ſtroke? How much more exceſſive doth it ſtill grow, if the death, by which they are hurried out of the world, be not only ſudden, but alſo violent? But this holy man loſt not one only child, but all his ſtock; all together, in one and the ſame hour, by one and the ſame calamity, were involv'd in the ſame common ruin. Had ſome been taken, and others left; had ſome died, and others eſcap'd, he might have found comfort in his ſorrows for thoſe whom he had loſt, from the enjoyment of thoſe, who by the mercy of God did ſtill ſurvive; but when all fell together, when he was in a moment from the happieſt of fathers become utterly childleſs, how wretched, how forlorn muſt his condition be? Or had there been a great interval between thoſe loſſes, which he ſuffer'd; had he had time to have recollected his thoughts, when one calamity came, and to have worn off that ſorrow which it had caus'd, before another evil overtook him, and rais'd in his ſoul a freſh diſquiet, he might have been able to have cop'd with theſe his afflictions one by one, and to have born up manfully againſt them, whilſt they attack'd him ſingly; but when one came cloſely upon the heels of another; when before there was any time for the healing of former wounds, freſh wounds were inflicted; when thoſe calamities, which ſeverally and apart were ſufficient to overwhelm an ordinary courage, did all jointly and together fall upon him, it might well be expected, that they ſhould preſs him down, and that he ſhould quite ſink away under a burden ſo grievous and inſupportable. How great therefore muſt his courage be, how exemplary his patience, how unſhaken his truſt in God, who in the midſt of ſo many and ſo ſore afflictions did not deſpond; and was ſo far from complaining againſt Providence, or *charging God fooliſhly*, or withdrawing his confidence in him, Job. 1. 22.

im, that he broke out into expreſſions of gratitude and thankſgiving; Job. 1. 21.
The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; bleſſed be the name
f the Lord. Tho' the Lord had taken away, yet this was no reaſon of
iſtruſt, becauſe the ſame Lord had given; and he who had before given,
ould again give: it was of his infinite goodneſs that he had once given,
nd the ſame goodneſs would diſpoſe him again to give. God had given
o him freely and plentifully, before he had an occaſion or opportuni-
y of expreſſing his firm dependence upon God; and ſince he had now,
ſo ſignal a manner, ſhewn that his truſt in God was built on ſo ſtrong
undations, that no afflictions could overbear it, none could ſo much
weaken it, he had the greater reaſon to hope that God would recom-
enſe him for this his ſteady faith; and that as he now bleſt his holy
me, when he ſtretch'd forth his hand in diſpleaſure to take away, ſo
e ſhould have occaſion hereafter to pour forth his benedictions, when
od in his mercy ſhould reach out his hand wide to give back what
e now took, and to compenſate to him his loſſes with an overplus of
ercies. Nor were theſe his hopes defeated, or this his exemplary
uſt in God unrewarded; for we are by the ſacred Hiſtory inform'd,
at *the Lord gave* Job *twice as much as he had before*, and that *the* Job.42.10,12.
rd bleſſed the latter end of Job *more than his beginning.*

WHEN therefore we find our ſpirits begin to flagg under the ſenſe of
y affliction, which falls upon us; when pains of body, or loſſes of eſtate,
deaths of relations or friends fill us with anxiety and ſorrow; when
r patience begins to be tir'd with ſufferings, which are greater than
can well bear, and our truſt in God to be ſhaken, becauſe he heaps
down his judgments upon us; let us enliven our fainting courage by
ting before us ſuch noble patterns as theſe; let us dwell upon them,
we find a generous emulation kindling in our breaſts; and let us
aſham'd to ſink under burdens, in their weight far diſproportion'd to
oſe, which men made of the ſame fleſh and blood as we are, and ſup-
rted by no other helps than are afforded to us, have without mur-
uring againſt God, without leſſening their confidence in him, with-
impeaching his juſtice, and without deſponding of his goodneſs, both
tiently endur'd, and triumphantly overcome. But becauſe foreign
amples do not ſo nearly affect us, as thoſe which have fal'n within
r own obſervation, and becauſe there is no room to doubt of what
r own experience hath taught us, let us, in the

Third PLACE, endeavour to ſtrengthen our reliance on God, from
e experience we our ſelves have had of his former loving-kindneſs to-
ards us.

TO God we owe our being, and thoſe bleſſings, which we either now
, or ever did enjoy. There are many calamities incident to men, which
e have, thro' the goodneſs of God, eſcap'd; many, which were ready
fall down upon our heads, and which we ſaw no poſſible way of
oiding, God has by his wonderful providence averted from us; ma-
more to be ſure there have been to which we were expos'd, but did
t ſo much as know of our danger; ſo that we were freed not only
om the pain, but which is a ſtill greater mercy, from the fear of them;
any, which after they had ſeiz'd us, and began to preſs us beyond our
rength, God did at firſt abate, and afterwards wholly remove; many,
hich have by God's over-ruling power been turn'd to our good, ſo that
e have reaſon to rejoyce, that we were viſited with them. Have we
ver been by a painful and lingring ſickneſs brought to the very brink

of the grave, and when all the methods of recovery have been in vain tried, when medicines have fail'd, and phyſicians have paſt the ſentence of death upon us, been, by ſome unexpected turn, ſome inviſible alteration, at laſt reſtor'd? Has our good name never been aſpers'd by any foul and baſe ſlander, under which we have long lain without being
Pſal. 37. 6. able to clear it, and has not God, by his good providence, *brought forth our righteouſneſs as the light, and our innocence as the noon-day*? Have
Prov. 24. 34. we never ſeen *poverty coming upon us as an armed man*, when on a ſudden God has rais'd us up unhop'd for benefactors to relieve us, or ſtruck out for us unforeſeen means of ſubſiſtence? Have we never ſeen a cloud gathering, which threatned ruin to our Country, or to our Church, which, when we ſaw no viſible ways of eſcaping, God has by his arm, in a manner to us inviſible, preſently diſpers'd?

IF we have had any ſuch experiments of God's goodneſs to us, as certainly we have had, and, unleſs we have been very careleſs obſervers of God's providence, muſt have taken notice of, we may from this ſenſe of God's paſt mercies to us draw a comfortable concluſion, that he will
2 Cor. 1. 10. ſtill be merciful; *He who hath deliver'd us from ſo great dangers, and doth deliver, in him we may ſafely truſt, that he will yet deliver us.*
Iſai. 59. 1. *Is the Lord's hand*, that has been ſo often ſtretch'd forth for our help, ſince *ſhortned, that it can no longer ſave*? Or *is his ear*, that has been ſo often open'd to our prayers, grown *heavy, that it can no more hear*? Are we like the perverſe *Iſraelites*, who argu'd after that wicked and
Pſal. 78. 20. abſurd manner; *Behold, he ſmote the rock, that the waters guſhed out, and the ſtreams overflowed; But can he give bread alſo, or provide fleſh for his people*? Can there be any thing imagin'd more ridiculous, or more provoking, than for men with the ſame breath to own God's power, and to expreſs their diſtruſt of it; to ſpeak of mercies which they have actually receiv'd from him, and to doubt whether he is able to beſtow upon them the like mercies? Was not God very juſtly incens'd againſt people that reaſon'd thus fooliſhly, and that acted thus
v. 21, 22. ingratefully? Can we wonder, that *when the Lord heard this, he was wroth, ſo that a fire was kindled againſt* Jacob, *and anger alſo came up againſt* Iſrael; *becauſe they believed not in God*, nay believed not their own eyes, *and truſted not in his ſalvation*; not in that ſalvation, of which
v. 23, 24. they had had ſo convincing, and ſo freſh experience, *when he had commanded the clouds from above, and open'd the doors of heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven*? And might not we juſtly expect to feel the ſad effects of his diſpleaſure, if we ſhould in the like manner diſtruſt that good providence of God, of which we have had ſo long, ſo happy experience? Ought we not therefore with holy *David* to be mindful of God's former mercies, and to be aſſur'd from thence of his future goodneſs towards us? Ought we not in our preſent diſtreſſes to betake our ſelves to him, whom we have found a gracious and ready helper in paſt trou-
Pſal. 61. 3, 4. bles? Ought we not with the ſame holy *David* devoutly and thankfully to ſay, *Thou haſt been a ſhelter for me, and a ſtrong tower: I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever; I will truſt in the covert of thy wings.*

LET us therefore, under all the pains of body and anxieties of mind, under all the frowns of fortune and difficulties of life, under all the evils which have befaln us, and all the apprehenſions of evils which we fear may befall us, under all our loſſes and all our wants, under all the uncertain proſpects which we may have for our ſelves, or for our families,

when

when all worldly comforts fail us, when we look out for aid, but there
s none to help us, when our hearts begin to fail us, when they are ready
to ſink under the load, and we find our ſelves in danger of being
uite overwhelm'd with deſpair, check our ſelves with this comfortable
eflection; that the more diſtreſs'd our condition is, the more proper
occaſion doth it adminiſter to us of exerciſing our faith, and of repoſing
our truſt in God. Let us rouſe our drooping ſpirits with this enlivening
queſtion, *Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul, and why art thou*
diſquieted within me? Truſt thou in God, who has power to help and
ſupport thee under the greateſt weakneſſes, and to reſcue thee out of the
greateſt difficulties, and to comfort thee under the greateſt diſtreſſes:
Truſt thou in God, who loves thee, as well as thou canſt love thy ſelf; who
hath compaſſion upon the miſerable; who *is faithful, and will not ſuffer* 1 Cor. 10. 13.
thee to be tempted above that thou art able; but will with the temptation
alſo make a way to eſcape, or make thee able to bear it: Truſt thou
in God, who has promis'd that none who truſt in him ſhall be forſaken,
and who *is not a man that he ſhould lie, neither the ſon of man that he* Num. 23. 19.
ſhould repent; but who is *faithful and true*, and *all whoſe promiſes are* 2 Cor. 1. 20.
yea and amen: Truſt thou in God, in whom the ſaints of all ages have
truſted, and have been deliver'd; to whom they cried, and have been heard:
Truſt thou in God, in whom thou haſt formerly truſted, and waſt not
confounded; who has *deliver'd thee in ſix troubles*, and on whom therefore Job 5. 19.
thou haſt reaſon to depend, that *in the ſeventh* he will not forſake
thee.

IF thou doſt thus put thy truſt in God, thou ſhalt have reaſon in
the iſſue to praiſe him; thou ſhalt praiſe him for giving thee grace
to put thy truſt in him; thou ſhalt praiſe him for the comforts which
thou ſhalt find by thus putting thy truſt in him; thou ſhalt praiſe him
for thoſe deliverances, which he ſhall work out for thee, and for thoſe bleſſings, both temporal and ſpiritual, which he ſhall confer upon thee; thou
ſhalt praiſe him here in the private retirements of the cloſet, and in
the publick congregation of the ſaints; and thou ſhalt praiſe him hereafter with angels and archangels, when *thy light afflictions, which were* 2 Cor. 4. 17.
but for a moment, ſhall have wrought for thee a far more exceeding and
eternal weight of glory.

SERMON XVIII.

Of Submiſsion to the Will of God.

MAT. XXVI. 39.

-----*Nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

THERE is no Chriſtian grace, which we have oftner occaſion to exerciſe, than that of an humble and patient ſubmiſsion to the will of God. There are few moments of our lives, in which we are not either under the preſſure of ſome evil, which lies heavy upon our minds; or under the apprehenſion of ſome grievous calamity, which hangs over our heads, and is ready to fall down upon us. In both theſe caſes an entire reſignation to the good pleaſure of God is neceſſary, that we ſhould without repining bear, whatever he hath been pleas'd to inflict; and that we ſhould have our minds well prepar'd to endure, whatever he in his infinite wiſdom ſhall think expedient farther to lay upon us. Thoſe who have taken the greateſt care to arm themſelves againſt the time of conflict, find it ſometimes difficult enough to ſtand their ground, and to come off conquerors in the day of battle; but thoſe who have in their proſperous ſtate made no proviſion againſt adverſity, thoſe who fall into the midſt of troubles defenſeleſs and unarm'd, thoſe who are then to learn the hard duty of ſubmiſsion, when they are call'd to practiſe it, will be much more at a loſs, how to bear up againſt evils unforeſeen and unprovided againſt, and how to demean themſelves in the needful time of trouble.

THE difficulties with which we are to encounter during our pilgrimage in this world, are very many and very great; ſo many, that we may not hope by any foreſight to eſcape them all; and ſome of them ſo great, that without due preparation we can't expect to be patient under them. Liable we are to be attack'd, with troubles of mind and with pains of body, with loſſes of our neareſt and deareſt friends, with the ruin of our eſtates, and with the blaſtings of our reputations: theſe we are obnoxious to in our own perſons, and in the perſons of thoſe who are e ſo cloſely tied to us by blood or by friendſhip, by affection or by tereſt, that what happens to them touches us as nearly, and afflicts as ſenſibly, as what happens to our ſelves. Upon all theſe occaſions, hich do ſo frequently occur, which are now, 'tis to be fear'd, preſent many of us, and which to thoſe, who may think them at a very eat diſtance; may probably be much nearer than they imagine, ſubmiſſion to the will of God is a duty which we are call'd to exerciſe, and which therefore it concerns us to be well-acquainted with, and to be well-prepar'd for. And this duty therefore I ſhall endeavour to preſs upon your conſciences from that powerful example of ſubmiſſion here ſet us by our bleſſed Saviour, who, when *he pray'd to his Father,* that the bitter *cup,* which he was now going to taſt, *might paſs from him,* did it with this reſtriction, *Nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

Now there are many conſiderations, and all of them of great force and ſtrength, which ought to induce us to imitate the pattern here propos'd. For firſt of all it is an example ſet us by Chriſt our Lord and Maſter, whom, as we are bound to obey in all his commands; ſo we are alſo oblig'd to follow in all his conduct, as far as we are able to reach up to it. What Chriſt ſaid upon one particular occaſion, is true in all caſes of the ſame or like kind; when he had waſh'd his diſciples feet, and had thereby given a remarkable inſtance of his wonderful humility and condeſcenſion, he inſtructed them in the uſe, which they ought to make of this his unparallel'd lowlineſs of mind and of deportment; *I have given you an example, that ye ſhould do as I have done.* This imitation of his example he prov'd to be their duty from that relation, in which they ſtood to him; *Ye call me Maſter, and Lord, and ye ſay well; for ſo I am. If I then your Lord and Maſter have waſhed your feet, ye alſo ought to waſh one anothers feet. Verily, verily I ſay unto you, the ſervant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is ſent, greater than he that ſent him.* As the diſciples then did, ſo we now do call *him Maſter and Lord*; as they in calling him ſo *ſaid well,* ſo we *ſay well* alſo in making the ſame recognition of his authority; as he was their Lord and Maſter, ſo he is ours; our Lord and Maſter he is by right of creation, as he who at firſt made us out of nothing; by right of purchaſe, as he who redeem'd us from a ſtate of bondage and miſery; by right of covenant, as he to whom we have by baptiſm vow'd obedience and ſubjection. If he then our Lord and Maſter did cheerfully ſubmit to the will of God, and patiently endure what his Father was pleas'd to inflict upon him, however grievous and diſtaſtful, we alſo ought with the ſame alacrity to conform our wills to the divine will; with the ſame patience to bear, whatever chaſtiſements God ſhall at any time viſit us with.

Joh. 13. 15.

v. 13.

v. 16.

The *ſervant is not greater than his Lord*; but we ſhould make ourſelves greater than our Lord, if we ſhould pretend an exemption from any of thoſe evils, to which our Lord, the Lord of all heaven and earth, was ſubject; if we ſhould fret under that yoke, which he was contented tamely and quietly to ſubmit unto. St. *John* hath told us, that *He that ſaith he abideth in Chriſt, ought himſelf alſo ſo to walk, even as he walked. To abide in Chriſt* is to be true members of Chriſt's myſtical body, to derive vital influence from him, as he is our head; unleſs we ſo abide in him, we are deſtitute of the means of grace, and excluded from the hopes of ſalvation: but we do not *abide in Chriſt,*

1 Joh. 2. 6.

except *we walk, even as he walked*; we do not *walk*, *as he walked*, unleſs we do in all things, as he did, prefer God's will unto our own: ſo that, without this entire reſignation to the good pleaſure of God, we are not lively members of Chriſt, we do not belong to his myſtical body, but ſhall be caſt forth as wither'd and ſuperfluous branches, which, Joh. 15. 6. he himſelf hath told us, *ſhall be caſt into the fire and burnt*. *As he,* 1 Pet. 1. 15. *who hath call'd us is holy*; *ſo ought we alſo to be holy in all manner of converſation.* Now the holineſs of Chriſt conſiſted in his ready obedience to all God's commands, however difficult; and in a patient ſubmiſſion to all God's chaſtiſements, however painful and ſevere: ſo that, except we do in the like manner conform our wills unto God's, unleſs we do obſerve all his precepts without reſerve, and bear all the afflictions, which he ſends, without repining, we muſt not pretend to be *holy*, *as he who hath call'd us is holy.*

And as we are by the Goſpel enjoyn'd to an imitation of our Saviour in all thoſe graces, of which he hath given us a pattern; ſo are we in particular requir'd to follow his unerring example in a patient ſubmiſ- 1 Pet. 2. 21. ſion of our ſelves to God's afflicting hand: *For even hereunto were we call'd*; *becauſe Chriſt alſo ſuffer'd for us, leaving us an example*, *that we ſhould follow his ſteps*: his ſteps we are to follow, as far as we can trace them, thro' the whole courſe of our duty; but thoſe ſteps, which he trode in the rugged path of ſorrows and afflictions, are in a more peculiar manner mark'd out for us, that we might be ſure to tread in the ſame. Chriſt had the ſame natural diſpoſitions, as we have; he was as ſenſible of pain, and as averſe to it, as we are; he found a reluctance of fleſh and blood againſt thoſe dolours of mind, and tortures of body, which he was call'd to endure: but tho' nature recoil'd at the dreadful proſpect, tho' ſelf-preſervation prompted him to pray, *that the cup might paſs from him*; yet he check'd all thoſe inbred deſires of eaſe with the Joh. 18. 11. ſame reflection, as he did St. *Peter*'s irregular zeal to reſcue him, *The cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it*? The cup was bitter, and therefore fleſh and blood would naturally diſreliſh it; but this thought, that the Father had given it him, ſweetned the potion, and made him take a full draught of it, without complaining. *Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me,* was the firſt thought that human frailty ſuggeſted even to our bleſſed Saviour himſelf; and therefore it cannot be blame-worthy in us, if upon the firſt haſty view of any great calamity ready to overtake us, we do in the like manner deſire and beg, that we may eſcape it; but when we have time to conſider and deliberate, we muſt bring our natural deſires under a ſtrict *diſcipline*, and curb them with the ſame reſtraint, as Chriſt did; *Nevertheleſs, not what I will, but thou wilt*: which we ſhall be the more induc'd to do, if we conſider,

Secondly, How much more Chriſt ſuffer'd, than we do, and how reaſonable therefore it is, that we ſhould bear leſs evils with the ſame reſignation, as he did much greater. Be the troubles of which we complain in number never ſo many, be they in their kind and meaſure never ſo afflictive, they are few in proportion to that innumerable train of evils, which Chriſt went thro'; they are light and trivial, in compariſon of that exceſſive weight, which our Saviour bore. His whole life from the firſt moment of it, that he drew in breath in the manger, to the laſt, when he pour'd forth his ſpirit on the croſs, was one continu'd ſcene of ſuffering, without any reſpite, without any long, any bright inter-

val

l of joy and proſperity. Do we complain, that others live in great
nty and affluence of all wordly goods, whilſt we are ſo far oppreſs'd
th poverty, that we want many of the comforts, or perhaps even
ne of the neceſſaries, of life? But know we not the mean and low con-
ion *of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that for our ſakes he became poor*? 2 Cor. 8. 9.
ve we forgot the bitter complaint which he made, *The foxes have* Mat. 8. 20.
les, and the birds of the air have neſts; but the ſon of man hath not
ere to lay his head? And ſhall we then repine at our being forc'd to
relief of others, when he who made heaven and earth, and all things
ch are therein, having taken upon him our nature, ſubſiſted on the
evolence of devout perſons, *who miniſtred unto him out of their ſub-* Luk. 8. 3.
ance? Do we at any time find our actions miſrepreſented, our good
igns fruſtrated, our perſons treated with ſcorn and contempt? And
not all theſe things happen to our bleſſed Lord and Saviour? Was
not for his *ſaying unto the ſick of the palſie, Son, be of good cheer, thy* Mat. 9. 2.
are forgiven thee, deem'd by the ſcribes an open *blaſphemer*? Was
not accus'd of ſcandalous converſation with publicans and ſinners,
cauſe he mix'd himſelf in their company only in order to reform them?
s he not look'd upon as unmortified and looſe in his diſcipline, be-
ſe *his diſciples faſted not, as did the diſciples of John, and of the* Mark 2. 18.
ariſees? Was he not repreſented as a profaner of the Sabbath, be-
cauſe he heal'd the ſick on Sabbath-days? Was he not charg'd with
wnright ſorcery, and *caſting out devils by* Beelzebub *the prince of* Mat. 12. 24.
devils? Was he not ſtyl'd a deceiver, an incendiary, a mad-man,
one poſſeſs'd with a devil? Did he not conſtantly *go about doing good*? Acts 10. 38.
d did he not as conſtantly for the good he did receive evil? Did he
ſo ſpeak, as man never ſpoke? And did he not perform thoſe won- Joh. 7. 46.
ous works, which no one before ever wrought? And were not thoſe,
whom he addreſs'd himſelf, deaf to all his perſwaſions, and proof
inſt the moſt convincing miracles?

ARE we touch'd to the quick, when we are treated with diſgrace?
d do we cry out for anguiſh, when we are afflicted with pain? And
there ever any ſhame like that to which our Saviour was expos'd,
pain like that wherewith he was tortur'd? Was he not with the
moſt ſcorn blindfolded, buffeted, ſpat upon, ſcourg'd, derided, poſt-
n'd to *Barabbas* a notorious thief, rebel, and murderer, crucified be-
ween two malefactors, and revil'd as a greater malefactor than either
them? Muſt not the pains of his body be very exquiſite, when he
s ſtretch'd upon the croſs, when his head was crown'd with thorns,
hen his hands and feet were pierc'd thro' with nails, when he was
rch'd with thirſt, when his *ſtrength was dried up like a potſheard*, Pſal. 22. 15.
hen his *tongue clave to his jaws, and he was brought to the duſt of*
ath? And muſt not the anguiſh of his ſoul be equally great, when
oaning under the burden of our ſins, which he had took upon him, and
king under the ſenſe of his Father's diſpleaſure, he cried out, *My God,* Mat. 27. 46.
God, why haſt thou forſaken me? Are not theſe ſufferings of our
viour recorded in the Goſpel? Are they not in a lively manner re-
eſented to us in the holy ſacrament? Do we not in in the bread there
oken ſee his body mangled, and in the wine there pour'd forth con-
mplate his blood ſhed upon the croſs? And ſhall we, who are the
ſciples of a crucified Saviour, we, who by a ſolemn act of our Reli-
on commemorate his bitter ſufferings, we, who expect to be ſav'd by
oſe very ſufferings, think it hard, that we are call'd to bear our croſs,

Mat. 20. 22. that we are *baptiz'd with the ſame baptiſm, that he was baptiz'd with*;
and that we are invited ſparingly to taſte of that cup, the very dregs
1 Pet. 4. 13. of which our Saviour drunk up? Should we not rather *rejoyce, in as
much as we are partakers of Chriſt's ſufferings; that when his glory
ſhall be reveal'd, we may be glad alſo with exceeding joy*? But we ſhall
be ſtill the more induc'd to follow the example of our Saviour in ſubmitting
our wills to the will of God, if we conſider,

Thirdly, THAT Chriſt ſuffer'd for our ſins, but we ſuffer for our own;
c. 5. 6. ſo that we have ſtill greater reaſon to *humble our ſelves under the mighty
hand of God.* When St. *Peter* propoſes to us the example of Chriſt, as
a pattern which we ought to copy in the patient ſufferance of afflictions,
c. 2. 22. he takes eſpecial notice, that *he did no ſin, neither was guile found in
his mouth*; but, notwithſtanding this his unſpotted innocence, he bore the
v. 23. contradiction of ſinners with invincible patience; *when he was reviled,
he reviled not again*; *when he ſuffer'd, he threatned not, but committed
himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.* Nor did he impeach the
righteouſneſs of God for pouring down his vengeance upon a blameleſs
Iſai. 53. 5. and innocent perſon; *he was wounded*, not for his own, but *for our
tranſgreſſions*; *he was bruis'd*, not for his own, but *for our iniquities*;
v. 7. *he was oppreſs'd, he was afflicted, yet he open'd not his mouth*; *he was
brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter*, as conſpicuous for his innocence, as
for his meekneſs, *and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb*, *ſo he
open'd not his mouth.* Now did he, who knew no ſin, thus patiently
v. 4. *bear our griefs, and carry our ſorrows*; did he not complain, when he
was thus *ſtricken, ſmitten of God, and afflicted*? And ſhall we repine at
providence, when we ſuffer ſome ſmall portion of that puniſhment, which
is due to us for our ſins; when any of thoſe bleſſings, which we have
by our tranſgreſſions juſtly forfeited, are taken from us; when judgments
leſs grievous, than we have by our iniquities deſerv'd, are inflicted on
Lam. 3. 39. us? *Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the puniſhment
of his ſins*? Hath he not procur'd this unto himſelf, in that he hath
Jer. 2. 19. forſaken the Lord his God? Doth not his *own wickedneſs correct him*,
and do not his own *backſlidings reprove him*? Hath he not greater reaſon
to thank God that he ſuffers no more, than to repine that he ſuffers
ſo much? Are not his very ſufferings a proof of God's love to him,
and a ſign that God has not given him over as deſperate and incorrigible?
Heb. 12. 5, 6. Ought he therefore *to deſpiſe the chaſtning of the Lord, or to
faint, when he is rebuked of him*? Ought he not to conſider, that *whom
the Lord loveth he chaſteneth, and* that he *ſcourgeth every ſon, whom
he receiveth*? Ought he not to look backwards upon his former diſobedience,
which hath made theſe chaſtiſements neceſſary for his amendment?
And ought he not to look forwards to thoſe advantages, which
v. 11. he may reap thereby, as knowing, that altho' *no chaſtening for the preſent
be joyous, but grievous; nevertheleſs afterwards it yieldeth the
peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs unto them which are exercis'd thereby*?
Ought he not to ſuppreſs all inſurrections of murmuring and diſcontent
Micah 7. 9. with this ſerious reflection, *I will bear the indignation of the Lord,
becauſe I have ſinn'd againſt him.* My Saviour, who had done no ſin,
ſuffer'd cheerfully the ſevereſt diſpleaſure of his Father on account of my
ſins imputed to him; and ſhall not I patiently bear the chaſtiſement of
God for my own ſins, whereby I have juſtly provok'd his wrath, and have
deſerv'd all thoſe torments, which infinite juſtice can inflict, and from
which nothing leſs than the infinite ſatisfaction made by Chriſt could
have deliver'd me?

THUS

THUS may we be able to learn the difficult leſſon of ſubmiſſion to God's will in all his diſpenſations, if we do but duly attend to the example of Chriſt; we may *with patience run the race that is ſet before us*, if, when we find our ſelves weary and ready to faint, we reanimate Hebr. 12. 1. our ſpirits by *looking unto Jeſus the author and finiſher of our faith, who* v. 2. *for the joy that was ſet before him, endur'd the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of God*: there he ſits viewing our conflict, interceding with his Father in our behalf, and by virtue of his meritorious ſufferings procuring for us the aids of his Spirit, to trengthen, to ſupport, and to comfort us under ours. But leſt we hould ſtill pretend, that the example of Chriſt, who was God as well s man, is by us mere men inimitable, that it is *too high for us*, ſo that *we cannot attain unto it*; it may not be improper for us to conſider, that we have many examples of ſubmiſſion to the divine will propos'd to us n holy Writ, which were ſet us by men who had no advantages which we want, and who wanted many advantages which we enjoy, and particularly that of the example of Chriſt.

NOW I ſhall out of theſe pitch upon one, which is the more remarkable, and the more proper to be propos'd, becauſe it furniſhes us with an inſtance of ſubmiſſion to the will of God, both in executing a command very difficult to be obey'd, and in ſuffering a calamity very grievous to be born; and that was the ſevere trial, which the Patriarch *Abraham* underwent, when God was pleas'd to bring his obedience to the teſt, and to ſee whether his natural affection to his child, or his entire ſubmiſſion to the divine will was moſt predominant in him. *God* Gen. 22. 1. *did tempt Abraham, and ſaid unto him, Abraham, and he ſaid, behold, here I am.* When he heard the voice of God, he could not but rejoyce at the ſound; when he heard that name mention'd, which God had given him as a pledge of his loving-kindneſs, the name *Abraham*, he Gen. 17. 5. muſt naturally expect, that God was now going to make ſome farther eclarations of his goodneſs towards him, that he was about giving a fuller nd clearer manifeſtation of the particular way, which his wiſdom had pitch'd upon, by which to make him *a father of many nations*. No wonder c. 17. 4. therefore that he ſo readily hearkens to the call, that he ſo greedily expects God's will and pleaſure, that he ſo impatiently longs to hear what gracious words God had to ſpeak unto him. *And he ſaid, Take now thy* c. 22. 2. *on.* Hitherto there was nothing ſaid, that could ſhock a tender parent; his own thoughts would preſently ſuggeſt to him what God was going arther to ſay, and to whom he would direct him to give his ſon in marriage. But he is not only commanded to *take his ſon*, but *his only ſon, his ſon* Iſaac, his ſon *whom he loved*. How muſt ſuch appellations as theſe affect the ſoul of a tender parent? How muſt they of neceſſity ſtir up thoſe flames of affection, which nature had implanted n him? How muſt his bowels yearn for *Iſaac*, the ſon of his old age, he only prop of his family, the heir of the promiſes, the ſon of his ove, and the ſon of all his hopes? This ſon he is enjoyn'd to offer; not o conſecrate him unto God as a prieſt ſet apart to miniſter unto him n holy things, but to *offer him* as a victim upon the altar, and to ſacrifice him as *a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains, which God ſhould ell him of*. How muſt nature ſtart and recoil at ſuch a command as his? How muſt the ears of a father tingle at ſuch an harſh injunction? How many doubts muſt there ariſe in his mind, whether ſuch a command could come from God? How many objections muſt there lie in his way againſt his compliance with it? Was it not very natural for him thus to expoſtulate with God? “Didſt thou therefore at firſt make “me a father, that thou mighteſt at laſt make me the murderer of my “own ſon? Didſt thou in my declining years, beyond my hopes, beſtow “on me this child, and doſt thou now, contrary to my juſt hopes, bereave me of him? Didſt thou in thy great goodneſs interpoſe thy ſupernatural power to make me an happy father, and doſt thou now require me to break thro' all the laws of nature, in order to render my “ſelf childleſs? If thou art in diſpleaſure determin'd to take away this “child, which thou haſt given me; yet may it not ſuffice, that he ſhould “die a natural death? Or, if thou haſt decreed, that his death ſhall be “violent, and that he ſhall be offer'd to thee by way of ſacrifice, yet “why muſt I be the offerer? Why muſt the hands of a father be embrued in the blood of his beloved ſon? Haſt thou implanted in my “breaſt a tender affection towards my child, and doſt thou now pluck “up by the roots that very plant, which is of thine own planting? How “is this ſevere command conſiſtent with thy unlimited goodneſs, or “how can it be reconcil'd with thy former promiſes? Haſt thou not Gen. 17. 7, 8. “*eſtabliſh'd a covenant between thy ſelf and me, and my ſeed after me in* “*their generations for an everlaſting covenant*? Haſt thou not ſaid, that “thou wouldſt *give to me, and to my ſeed after me, all the land of Canaan for an everlaſting poſſeſſion*? Haſt thou not promis'd to make c. 15. 5. “me *a father of many nations*? Didſt thou not bid me to *look towards* “*the heavens, and tell the ſtars, if I was able to number them*, and “didſt thou not declare, that *ſo ſhould my ſeed be*? Didſt thou not, before the birth of *Iſaac*, ſignifie unto me, that theſe promiſes ſhould “be verified in his perſon, and his progeny, that thou wouldſt *eſtabliſh* “*thy covenant with him for an everlaſting covenant, and with his ſeed* “*after him*? And how ſhall theſe promiſes be accompliſh'd, how ſhall “this covenant be perpetuated to me, and to my poſterity, how ſhall “all nations be bleſſed in me and my ſeed, how ſhall they be bleſſed in “my ſon *Iſaac* and his ſeed, if this very ſon *Iſaac*, who ſhould convey “this bleſſing to all generations, muſt, before he is the father of any “one child, by thy command be cut off from the land of the living?

These, or ſuch as theſe, might have been the expoſtulations of *Abraham*; ſuch probably would have been the expoſtulations of any other father upon the like occaſion: but ſuch was his entire ſubmiſſion to the will of God, ſo undiſtinguiſhing and without reſerve his obedience to the divine pleaſure, ſo fixt an opinion had he of the juſtice and equity and wiſdom of all God's commands, and all his diſpenſations, that without demur, without any farther deliberation in his own breaſt, without conſulting the opinions of any other, he immediatly, willingly, and cheerfully put in execution that command, which, however ungrateful it might be to fleſh and blood, however repugnant to his own inclinations, he knew to be fit and reaſonable, becauſe he was fully and entirely perſwaded that it was the will of God. Had he been to have loſt his ſon by any other ſtroke, his patience had been highly commendable in bearing ſuch a loſs without murmuring; but when he was to ſacrifice his ſon with his own hands unto God, he made at the ſame time a ſacrifice of himſelf, of his natural propenſions, and of his ſtrongeſt inclinations and inborn appetite, to the ſuperior will of God.

If therefore we would approve our ſelves the true children of *Abraham*, let us do the works of *Abraham*; let us be ready to execute the

harſheſt

rſheſt of God's commands, how irkſome ſoever they may ſeem to fleſh
d blood; let us cheerfully acquieſce under the ſharpeſt afflictions,
herewith God ſhall pleaſe to try us, how repugnant ſoever they may
pear to the bent of our own natural inclinations. If any ſore judg-
ent threatens us; if the clouds be gathering over our heads, if they
em ready to burſt, and with great fury to fall down upon us; if pover-
or diſgrace, if ſickneſs or pain, if loſs of friends, or loſs of life attack
; if death ſhakes his dart at us, or ſeem more terrible by threatning
take away a life more dear to us than our own; let us make uſe of
prudent and lawful methods to divert the ſtorm. Let us with prayers
tears, with ſupplications and faſtings, with holy vows and ſtedfaſt
rpoſes of amendment, endeavour to pacifie God, and to prevail with
n to with-hold his arm from ſtriking us. But if he, after all, is pleas'd
viſit our tranſgreſſions with the rod, and our iniquity with ſtripes; Pſal. 89. 32
us receive the ſtrokes of his paternal hand with a filial reverence and
tiful ſubmiſſion; let our words, and let our thoughts, be the ſame with
oſe of the good old *Eli*; *It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him* 1 Sam. 3. 18.
d: yea rather *let this mind be in us, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus*;
d as often as we pray or deſire, that the cup of God's wrath may paſs
om us, let us never forget to qualifie our requeſts and our wiſhes with
is reſtriction, *Nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

SER-

SERMON XIX.

Of Rejoycing in God.

Psal. XCVII. 12.

Rejoyce in the Lord, O ye righteous.

THERE is no duty more reaſonable, more becoming, and agreeable; and yet there is none more generally miſunderſtood, leſs enquir'd into, and worſe regulated, than that of Rejoycing. Joy ſeems to be the peculiar privilege of innocent and happy creatures; when therefore we conſider our ſelves as ſinners, as poor, and naked, and miſerable; polluted with the ſtain, and loaded with the guilt, of our iniquities; cloath'd with infirmities, beſet with enemies, born to trouble, expos'd to danger, always liable, and ſometimes oblig'd, to grief and ſorrow; we may be apt upon this melancholly view to think, that Joy *is not made for man*, and leaſt of all for Chriſtians; and be tempted to underſtand our Saviour in the moſt ſtrict and rigorous ſenſe, when he tells his diſciples, that *they ſhall weep and lament, but the world ſhall rejoyce*.

John 16. 20.

THE methods which men uſually take to expreſs their Joy, ſeem, at firſt view, to give the good Chriſtian ſtill farther objections againſt it; and when he obſerves that levity of mind, and vanity of thoughts; that exceſs, intemperance, and licentiouſneſs, which it too often occaſions; he thinks he may well be juſtified, if, with *Solomon*, he *ſays of laughter, that it is mad; and of mirth, what doth it*? But theſe ſeeming objections againſt this duty of Rejoycing will eaſily be remov'd; the nature of it will be fully open'd; the benefits we may hope to reap from it will clearly be diſcern'd; and we ſhall ſoon be ſatisfied, that Joy and Gladneſs is as ſuitable to our nature and Religion, as it is agreeable to our deſires and inclinations; if we conſider carefully the full import and meaning of this well-weigh'd exhortation in the text, *Rejoyce in the Lord, O ye righteous.*

Eccl. 2. 2.

IN ſpeaking to which words I ſhall ſhew,

I. WHAT it is to *rejoyce in the Lord.*

II. THAT we lawfully may, and that we are in duty bound ſo *to rejoyce.*

Firſt THEN, I am to ſhew, what it is *to rejoyce in the Lord.*

NOW this implies our making God the chief, the ſupreme, and ad-
uate object of our Joy. The true nature of Joy conſiſts in that agree-
le ſerenity and ſatisfaction of mind, which we feel upon the pre-
nce and fruition of ſome Good. Good therefore is the proper object of
r Joy; Good, not in it ſelf alone, but Good to us; ſuch as repairs, pre-
rves, advances, exalts, perfects our nature. Thoſe pleaſures which
ve a natural tendency to impair, to corrupt, to deſtroy our nature,
ch as ſpring from an unclean fountain, carry pollution along with
em, and end in pain, what appearance of delight ſoever they may at
eſent ſeem to afford us, are yet very far from being, in any ſenſe,
proper object of a true, real, and ſubſtantial Joy. That Good alone
be ſaid properly to be the compleat object of our Joy, which is pure
d unmix'd; not ſullied with any the leaſt degree of evil, which would
ceſſarily abate the happineſs we ſhould enjoy in it, by rendring us
ble to, and afraid of, miſery. The Good we are to rejoyce in muſt
full, ſufficient, and ſatisfactory; proportionable to the deſires, the
nts, the neceſſities; and ſuitable to the inclinations, the condition,
circumſtances of thoſe, who are to be delighted with it. It muſt
n effectual, prevalent, and ſoveraign Good; able to remove from
not only the preſent preſſure, but the danger, the poſſibility, or at
the fear of evil. It muſt be a ſubſtantial, laſting, durable Good;
ortal, like the ſoul, that is to be ſatisfied; ever yielding freſh
ght, and yet never to be exhauſted: in a word, it muſt be our
proper Good; a Good, which we may be able to attain, and ſure
hold faſt; a Good always preſent with us, and never to be taken
n us.

ow on all theſe accounts, God alone is the proper and adequate ob-
of our Joy. It is he only whom we can truly look upon, as a pure, per-
, ſuitable, ſoveraign, eternal, and, what is ſtill more, our own, pro-
, peculiar Good. *In him* alone *we live, move, and have our Being*: Acts 17. 28.
only knows what is beſt for us; and, we may be confident that his
ributes will all *work together for our good.* His wiſdom will con-
ve the proper means to ſecure our happineſs; his power will effect it;
goodneſs will incline him to beſtow it on us: in him alone there-
e we have juſt reaſon *to rejoyce.* Not that all Joy, which is not im-
diately and directly fix'd and terminated upon God, is unlawful and
bidden: he himſelf hath *given us all things richly to enjoy*; and we 1 Tim. 6. 17.
only may, but muſt, therefore rejoyce in them. But our Joy muſt
fix'd on him, as our univerſal, chief, and ultimate Good; and upon
er things, as occaſional, ſubordinate, and inſtrumental to that. We
, no doubt, rejoyce in the good things of this world; but ſuch Joy
ſt not be excluſive of God, nor in preference to him. Our ſatiſ-
ion in thoſe things muſt be ſo manag'd, that we do not forget that
d is the Author and Beſtower of them. We muſt not let our hearts
entirely taken up with, and finally reſt in them: we muſt delight
them ſo far only, as they are ſubſervient to, and conſiſtent with, our

Joy in God; and be ready and willing to part with them, whenever they interfere with this Joy, or unqualifie and indiſpoſe us for it. The ſatisfaction which we receive from them, muſt be aſcrib'd, not to the things themſelves, but to his free grace and bounty, who is pleas'd to furniſh us with theſe materials of our Joy, and vouchſafes to give us alſo a taſte and reliſh of them. The degrees and meaſures of the delight we take in theſe things, the method and manner of expreſſing it, muſt be ſuch, as the law of God allows and requires; not exceeding the bounds of ſobriety, and temperance, and moderation. We our ſelves muſt be righteous, if we would rejoyce as we ought: we muſt be aſſur'd of our own ſincerity, we muſt have confidence toward God, before we can reaſonably expect to have any Joy in him, or in any thing elſe that we receive from him. We muſt, according to the method the
2 Cor. 13. 11. Apoſtle hath laid down, firſt be *perfect*, and then we may *be of goo comfort*: we our ſelves muſt *live in peace*, in peace with God, with our own conſciences, with all the world, *and* then *the God of love and peace will be with us.*

Without theſe good diſpoſitions, we have no title to *rejoyce in the Lord*, and are unqualified likewiſe for any true Joy in any thing
Eccl. 7. 6. beſide him. *As the crackling of thorns under a pot, ſo*, ſays the wiſe man, *is the laughter of a fool*: ſuch is the Joy of the wicked; it is ſoon kindled, but it is quickly extinguiſh'd; it is glaring, but tranſient; it makes a ſhew, but there is little heat in it. But the Joy of *thoſe who rejoyce in the Lord*, is a ſedate, rational, and manly pleaſure: if their appetites are not ſo keen and ſtrong as thoſe of other men, their delight is for that reaſon more laſting, and as much beyond that of the wicked as the enjoyment of our health, and our ſenſes is more deſireable, *than* thoſe ſeeming tranſports of pleaſure, which men may ſometimes fancy themſelves to have in a fever, or in a frenzy. The delights which ſome may hope to reap from the pleaſures of ſin, are all empty and deceitful, ſtinted in their meaſure, ſhort in their duration, bitter in the end, fatal in their conſequences, and unſatisfactory even in the very enjoyment: for, as the wiſe man aſſures us, in the midſt of all ſuch Joy the
Prov. 14. 13. *heart is ſorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heavineſs.* Such Joy as this is indeed forbidden us; but it is becauſe it robs us of truer and more valuable Joys: it cuts off our title to much greater pleaſures in reverſion, and ſpoils the preſent reliſh, which the proſpect of thoſe pleaſures would even now afford us. We are to deny our ſelves in ſenſual immoderate, exceſſive Joy, not becauſe God hath forbidden us to re-
1 John. 1. 4. joyce at all, but for this reaſon, that *our Joy may be full*, and that we may rejoyce the more abundantly. For as I propos'd *to ſhew* in the

Second Place, we lawfully may, and are in duty bound, ſo *to rejoyce.*

Joy is a paſſion which God himſelf hath implanted in our nature and it cannot be thought therefore that the deſign of Religion is entirely to root it out: it is only to direct it to, and fix it upon, its beſt, most proper, and becoming object. It is not only lawful, but neceſſary for us to deſire happineſs, and to endeavour to attain what we look upon to be good for us. But now there would be no account to be given of theſe deſires; we ſhould have no inclination to chuſe and follow that, which we apprehend to be good, if it were not for that complacency and ſatisfaction, which we hope to take in it, when we are poſ-

ſeſ

ſ'd of it. The pleaſure and delight we promiſe our ſelves from the ition of any object, is the ſpring that ſets all our faculties on work, l moves and quickens them in compaſſing the propos'd end. Whatr therefore we may lawfully deſire to obtain, that, when obtain'd, may lawfully delight in.

Every good Chriſtian, whatever his condition and circumſtances , hath always before him juſt matter of Rejoycing. If the preſent ture of his affairs is not delightful and entertaining, he is at liberty to k back, to call to mind the good things he hath formerly enjoy'd, to take pleaſure and ſatisfaction in the remembrance of them. If ſe are not ſufficient to refreſh and delight him, he knows how to his eyes forward, and place before his view ſuch ſure and laſting terials of Joy and Comfort, as can never fail, as are never to be exſted. He hath temporal, and he hath ſpiritual Joys; Joys common, l Joys peculiar; ſuch as other men may ſhare with him, and ſuch as world hath no part or portion in: he is well pleas'd, when *he re-ces with them that rejoyce*; and he can be content alſo, when his recing is in himſelf alone, and not in another. The taſt he hath of ritual pleaſures, the delight he takes in them, is no way inconſiſtent h that Joy and Satisfaction, which temporal bleſſings may afford him. ſe are not the leſs, but the more agreeable to him, becauſe he is of the other. He looks upon the temporal felicity he poſſeſſes now, pledge and earneſt of that far greater ſpiritual happineſs, he ſhall oy hereafter. He knows how to bring the pleaſure, which earthly ſſings yield him, within its proper meaſure, bounds, and regulation; nd being ſecure therefore of enjoying theſe pleaſures innocently, he ſt neceſſarily have a truer taſt of them, and a more juſt ſatisfaction them.

Temporal bleſſings, health and plenty, pleaſure and proſperity, our and reputation, are us'd frequently in Scripture, as ſpurs to cken, as rewards to encourage, our obedience. But theſe motives uld be of no weight with us, theſe bleſſings would be of no advane to us, if it was not lawful to be pleas'd with them, and to rejoyce them. The delight and comfort which they afford us, is the only luable thing in them; and they would not therefore have been offer'd God to us, if this delight were any way inconſiſtent with the deſign d ſcope of our Religion; if it were any bar to our holineſs here, or our happineſs hereafter. We are taught to pray to God for the comts and conveniencies, as well as the neceſſaries of life; and what we y without ſin pray for, that we may, no doubt, innocently be pleas'd th. The wiſe man, who had the largeſt experience of earthly bleſſings, d beſt underſtood their vanity, tho' he was fully ſatisfied of their infficiency to procure us true and real happineſs, does yet by no means ny us a free and innocent uſe of them; is very far from forbidding to take a moderate delight in them. If we will be determin'd by his thority, we muſt allow *it* to be *good and comely for one to eat and* (Eccl. 5. 18.) *drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the n, all the days of his life, which God hath given him*; *for it is his por-n.* So far is the Royal Preacher from thinking, that they who reyce in temporal bleſſings, are for that reaſon defective in their duty wards their Creator, that he makes it the peculiar bleſſing of the Alighty, a ſign of their being in a ſtate of grace and favour with God, at they are able to rejoyce in them: for as it follows in the next verſe,

Eccl. 5. 19. *Every man alſo, to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hat*
given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoyc
v. 20. *in his labour, this is the gift of God. He ſhall not much remember th*
days of his life, he ſhall not diſquiet himſelf with the troubles and di
appointments he meets with here below, *becauſe God anſwereth him i*
the Joy of his heart. Had a moderate and well-regulated enjoyment o
our ſelves been contrary to the law of reaſon, the wiſe man would no
c. 2. 24. have adviſ'd us to have *made our ſoul enjoy good in our labour.*

THEY who place Religion in a moroſe diſlike, and pretended de
ſtation, of all the innocent unforbidden pleaſures of life; and think th
a ſowr, melancholly, reſerv'd, and ſullen temper is the only true ſi
of Grace, ſeem wholly to forget, that it is God alone who created th
earthly bleſſings; that it is he only who beſtows them on us, a
makes us capable of taking pleaſure in them. It is none of the ſmall
Ecclus. 1. 12. of thoſe privileges that are annex'd to *the fear of the Lord,* that
maketh a merry heart; that it *giveth Joy and Gladneſs, and a crow*
of Rejoycing. What miſtaken prejudices ſoever ſome men may ente
tain againſt an eaſie, a cheerful, and a ſprightly temper; how inconſiſte
ſoever they may think it with that harſh, rigid, and ſevere notion
Religion, which they have been taught to form; yet certain it is, th
ſuch a frame and temper of ſoul, as this, is ſo far from being a proo
that a man hath no ſenſe of God and goodneſs upon his mind, that
is rather an argument, that he hath made great advances in Religion
and render'd the harſheſt and moſt difficult inſtances of his duty habi
tual and familiar, and therefore eaſie and agreeable to him. Innocen
and inoffenſive mirth and cheerfulneſs ſhould rather, one would im
gine, be inſeparable from goodneſs, than inconſiſtent with it: and i
ſeems contrary to the reaſon of the thing, that an ill man ſhould eve
be of a cheerful, or a good one of a ſad countenance. Many excellen
things are in the books of *Solomon* ſpoken to the advantage of this hap
py diſpoſition of mind: and what he ſays of wiſdom, a man may alſ
Wiſd. 7. 8, 9, 10. ſay of cheerfulneſs; *I preferr'd her before ſceptres and thrones, an*
eſteem'd riches nothing in compariſon of her. Neither compar'd I un
her any precious ſtone, becauſe all gold in reſpect of her is as a litt
ſand, and ſilver ſhall be counted as clay before her. I lov'd her abov
health and beauty, and choſe to have her inſtead of light: for the ligh
that cometh from her never goeth out.

TRUE Joy, when it is founded upon a right principle, directed t
its proper object, kept within its due compaſs, and not ſuffer'd to e
ceed either in its meaſure, or in its duration, is not only lawful, bu
commendable; not only what we may, without ſin, allow our ſelve
in, but what we can't, without folly, abridge our ſelves of. Pleaſur
and good, pain and evil, are but different expreſſions for one and th
ſame thing. No action is ever forbidden us, but what, upon the whol
brings more pain than pleaſure; none is commanded us, but what, a
things conſider'd, yields greater degrees of pleaſure, than it does of pai
And it can never therefore be an objection againſt any thing we unde
take, that it will cauſe Joy; nor a commendation of any action, th
it will produce Sorrow. True it is, the great duty of repentance do
in the very nature of it include ſorrow; but then the end of this ſor-
row is, that we may be put into a condition of rejoycing the more abun-
dantly. The ſenſe of our ſins muſt make us *weep and lament*; but the
our ſorrow will be ſoon *turn'd into Joy.* Tho' our converſion hath it
pangs;

angs; yet we ſhall *no more remember the anguiſh, for Joy that a* new John 16. 21.
an is born into the world.

Whatever reaſons we may have for our grief and ſorrow, they
e mightily overbalanc'd by thoſe motives, that recommend Joy and
ladneſs. If the ſenſe of our manifold infirmities, our heinous ſins, our
rievous ſufferings, our violent temptations; if the proſperity of ours,
nd God's enemies; if the calamities of our brethren, and his faithful
rvants, lye hard upon us, and may ſeem to juſtifie and require a more
an ordinary degree of grief; yet *in the Lord* we have ſtill ſufficient
atter *of rejoycing*; of rejoycing in God, who is our Creator, our Pre-
rver, our Father, our Friend; of rejoycing in Chriſt, in his perſon,
his office, in the graces he vouchſafes us, in the light of his coun-
nance, in the hopes of his glory, in the greatneſs of his love, in the
ceeding riches of his pardoning mercy, in the fidelity of his promiſes,
the efficacy of his interceſſion, in his readineſs to aſſiſt, in his power
ſupport us in time of need.

These conſiderations, if we would reflect and dwell upon them, are
fficient to enable us, under the moſt trying calamities, *to rejoyce, and* Mat. 5. 12.
exceeding glad, to break forth into Joy, to ſing and ſhout, and re- Iſai. 52. 9.
ce and be glad with all the heart, with Joy unſpeakable and full of 1 Pet. 1. 8.
ry. The Lord, the object of our Joy, is the Joy of Saints, the Joy
Angels, the Joy of God, and therefore muſt be ours alſo. The *Jews*,
read, were not only allow'd, but commanded to rejoyce. It was
rt of their law, that *they ſhould rejoyce in every thing they put their* Deut. 12. 7.
nd unto; that *they ſhould rejoyce in every good thing, which the Lord* c. 26. 11.
ir God had given them; that *they ſhould keep a ſolemn feaſt unto* c. 16. 15.
e Lord their God, and ſurely rejoyce in it. The many calamities that
el that people, the captivity they were under, the ſufferings they en-
ur'd, the judgments they felt, did in no wiſe excuſe them from the per-
rmance of this duty. *The heart of them that ſought the Lord,* was,
der all the viciſſitudes of their affairs, ſtill oblig'd to *rejoyce.* And
e Royal *Pſalmiſt* himſelf was a remarkable example of this virtue:
ſoul was ſore vexed; it was diſquieted within him, *he was wearied* Pſal. 6. 3, &c.
h his groaning; *all the night made he his bed to ſwim, and water'd*
couch with his tears. The ſnares of death compaſs'd him round Pſal. 18. 4.
out, the pains of hell gat hold upon him. And yet we find, that in
e midſt of all this darkneſs, which had overſpread him, a glimpſe of
y and light broke in upon him, and enabled him, under all theſe ſevere
yals, *to rejoyce in the ſtrength of God, to be ſtill exceeding glad in*
e ſalvation of the Lord.

Now, if this duty of Rejoycing was ſo clearly enjoyn'd, and ſo regular-
practis'd, under the Old Teſtament, we can't doubt but that it is as ſtrict-
commanded, and has been equally obſerv'd, under the New. Chriſt's
ming into the world was uſher'd in with Joy; *a multitude of the hea-* Luk. 2. 13, 14.
nly hoſt prais'd God, and ſung glory to him, peace on earth, and good-
ill towards men. The great buſineſs of our Saviour's life was to preach
e *glad tidings of great Joy, which was to be unto all people*; and at
is departure out of this world he took care to leave his Diſciples joy-
ul: *Theſe things,* ſays he, *I have ſpoken unto you, that my Joy may re-* John 15. 11.
ain in you, and that your Joy might be full. What our Saviour thus
ecommends to his Diſciples, that St. *Paul*, we find, preſſes equally up-
n all Chriſtians: *Rejoyce,* ſays he, *in the Lord alway*; *and again* Phil. 4. 4.
ſay, Rejoyce. The words are emphatical, and are purpoſely repeated,

to create our attention, and to command our obedience to them. *Again I ſay, Rejoyce*: I, who am an Apoſtle, and who ſpeak to you in the name, and by the authority of Chriſt; I, who *am a man of like paſſions with you,* and can recommend this duty to you by mine own experience; from my example you ſee plainly, that you may, and from the power Chriſt hath delegated to me, you muſt be convinc'd, that you ought to rejoyce in the midſt of all your ſufferings.

A WELL-GROUNDED, unſhaken, never-ceaſing Joy is the privilege, and character of the righteous, in all the different ſcenes and periods of Pſal. 112. his life: *Unto the upright,* ſaith David, *there ariſeth light in darkneſs. He ſhall not be afraid of evil tidings; he delighteth greatly in the commandments of the Lord*; his Joy therefore, as well as *his righteouſneſs, endureth for ever*. If his life be proſperous, if *wealth and riches be in his houſe*; *if his ſeed be mighty upon earth,* and his *generation bleſſed,* he is then bound in gratitude to rejoyce; and to be ſorrowful in ſuch a caſe, would argue him inſenſible of God's mercies, and unthankful for them. If adverſity be his lot, if miſery and misfortune ſurround 1 Pet. 4. 13. him on every ſide; yet ſtill he hath reaſon to *Rejoyce*, in that he is counted worthy to be made *partaker of the ſufferings of Chriſt*; in that he hath an opportunity put into his hand of ſhewing his reſignation to the divine will. Adverſity is not only tolerable, but a bleſſing to a good Chriſtian, and as ſuch therefore is the proper object of his Joy. We have a noble inſtance of this in the Prophet *Habakkuk*, who, from his own experience, recommends this duty in the moſt lively manner, and by c. 3. 17, 18. the moſt forcible expreſſions: *Altho' the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat, the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls*; *yet I will rejoyce in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my ſalvation.*

THE reaſon God gives for deſerting his people the *Jews*, and giving Deut. 28. 47. them over into the hands of their enemies, was this, *becauſe they ſerv'd not the Lord their God with Joyfulneſs and with Gladneſs of heart.* And if the want of Joy was ſo ſeverely puniſh'd by the Almighty, we might from hence alone conclude, that it is the duty of all *to be joyful before the Lord their God,* that *praiſe is comely for the upright,* and that *it becometh well the juſt to be thankful*. *Joy* is by St. *Paul* rank'd Gal. 5. 22. among *the fruits of the Spirit*, and therefore ſhould be found in all, who Epheſ. 4. 30. are *ſeal'd by that Spirit unto the day of redemption*. The deſcriptions which the holy Scripture gives us of heaven and hell, are all compris'd in this, that the one is a place of Joy and comfort, the other of grief 1 Pet. 1. 8. and ſorrow. *Rivers of pleaſure at God's right hand for evermore, joys unſpeakable, and full of glory,* are the lot of the Saints: *tribulation and anguiſh, weeping, and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth,* are the portion of the damn'd. Perfect and unmix'd Joy and pleaſure are the reward of the one; exquiſite and unallay'd ſorrow and deſpair the puniſhment of the other. That Joy therefore, which ſhall be our happineſs in the other world, it muſt be our aim and endeavour to attain, as far as we are able, in this: that ſorrow, which we would eſcape hereafter, we muſt take all due care to keep at its proper diſtance here.

IF happineſs be but the perfection of virtue, Joy muſt be one of the moſt neceſſary diſpoſitions for the heavenly ſtate; and if we look into the properties and effects of Joy, we ſhall find that nothing keeps us ſteadier in the means of grace, nothing qualifies us better for the hope

glory. Joy warms and enlivens, refreſhes and revives our ſpirits,
eſerves the health of our bodies, and the temper of our minds, and
that means diſpoſes and qualifies us for the due diſcharge of the ſe-
ral duties of our ſtations. 'Tis Joy that puts life and vigour into our
uls, animates our endeavours by the hopes of ſucceſs, inſpires us with
urage and reſolution, and baniſhes from the mind that ſloth and im-
tence, thoſe timorous ſuſpicions and jealouſies, which are the neceſ-
y effects of a lazy, unactive, and unprofitable ſorrow. All Joy is a
rt of victory, and he that rejoyces therefore, like other conquerours,
ſt needs be encourag'd mightily by his ſucceſs, and go on, with more
urance and ſtrength, *from conquering to conquer*. It is the great un-
ppineſs of grief and ſorrow, that it impairs, weakens, and diſtracts the
nd; employs it wholly in the fruitleſs contemplation of its own mi-
y, and indiſpoſes it therefore for diſcovering or obſerving the proper
thods, that ſhould be us'd for its recovery. 'Tis the obſervation of
wiſe man, that *by the ſorrow of the heart the ſpirit is broken*: the Prov. 15. 13.
derſtanding is perplex'd, the will unreſolv'd, and the paſſions let looſe,
thout check or controul. By immoderate and exceſſive grief our
ole frame is diſorder'd; impatience and fury, complaints, murmur-
, and repining blind the eyes of our reaſon; and tho' perhaps we may
ke ſome attempt toward removing the trouble, that bears ſo hard
on us, yet, whilſt the ſmart continues, we ſeldom allow our ſelves
e to conſider of the moſt proper remedy. *A merry heart*, ſaith So- Prov. 17. 22.
non, *doeth good, like a medicine*; *but a broken ſpirit drieth the*
es.

A MAN of a pleaſant and a cheerful ſpirit is aſſur'd, active, and in-
ſtrious: he ſoon reſolves upon his duty, hath no fears upon him of
impoſſibility of performing it, and finds himſelf therefore endued
th ſufficient power to accompliſh it. A few diſappointments will not
ect him, becauſe he hath had the experience of greater ſucceſs to en-
rage him: he knows that he has a good and gracious Maſter, and
ſerves him therefore cheerfully. He hath a ſure and lively proſpect
the wages he is to receive, and, upon the ſtrength of this encourage-
nt, he goes about his work with gladneſs. Whilſt the melancholy
deſponding perſon, like *Sampſon* with his ſtrength gone from him,
doubtful and unreſolv'd which way he ſhall take, the cheerful man
h finiſh'd half his race: the one is a great while a ſetting out, and
s on but heavily; the other begins betimes with vigour, and with
ual alacrity perſeveres unto the end. Whenever the Tempter endea-
urs to trouble, or diſcourage him, with the view of his paſt ſins, he
n joyfully apply to himſelf that moſt gracious declaration of our Sa-
our: *Be of good cheer, thy ſins are forgiven thee.* When a phyſician Mat. 9. 2.
ds us hope well, we think we have good ground to be cheerful; and
ch more therefore may we rejoyce, whilſt he that ſpeaks health to
, beſtows it even whilſt he ſpeaks.

IT ſeems to argue a diſtruſt of our gracious Maſter, and a diffidence
his promiſes, when, notwithſtanding all the comforts he reaches out
us, we ſtill refuſe to be comforted, and go on to think we do well to
ſorrowful. Such a conduct, as this, muſt needs miniſter great oc-
ſion of offence to our weaker brethren, bring a diſcredit upon our Re-
gion, and give our enemies an occaſion to expoſe and reject it. It muſt
ceſſarily unfit us for the due diſcharge of many parts of our duty, and
ceedingly leſſen and allay that delight and ſatisfaction, which we ſhould

otherwiſe take in doing it. 'Tis our duty to comfort the feeble-minded, and to impart joy to them that want it; but we can have no hopes of ſucceſsfully performing this great act of charity to others, if we are not joyful our ſelves. Let us therefore poſſeſs our ſouls with a thorough
1 John 4. 18. ſenſe of the love of God towards us, and let this *perfect love caſt out* our grief, as well as our *fear*: O! let not any ill-grounded, miſplac'd, and unprofitable ſorrow diſquiet our own ſouls, diſcourage others, dis honour our Lord, expoſe *that holy Name, by which we are call'd*, t prejudice and reproach; unfit us for our duty, and render us uncapabl of promoting the glory of God, or of contributing to the good of me And let us conſider ſeriouſly the many tyes we are under, the oblig
Pſal. 100. 2. tion and encouragement we have, *to ſerve the Lord with gladneſs, a* *come before his preſence with* thankſgiving.

We have ſeen what it is to *rejoyce in the Lord*, and have been ſhew that we may, and that we muſt rejoyce in him. Let us therefore wi an humble confidence offer up our prayers at the throne of grace, th
Pſal. 4. 6. God would be pleas'd *to lift up the light of his countenance upon us*, th
Pſal. 51. 8. he would *make us to hear of Joy and Gladneſs, that the bones which h* *hath broken may rejoyce*; that he would be pleas'd to eſtabliſh his kin
Rom. 14. 17. dom in our hearts, not *in righteouſneſs* only, but in *peace and joy i* *the Holy Ghoſt*; and that he would teach, direct, and enable us *to re-*
Phil. 4. 4. *joyce in the Lord*, yea *to rejoyce in him alway*.

And may the God of hope fill us with all Joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope thro' the power of the Holy Ghoſt, that *the peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding*, may rule in our hearts,
1 Pet. 1. 8. 9. that we may *rejoyce with Joy unſpeakable and full of glory*, and may at laſt *receive the end of our faith, even the ſalvation of our ſouls*. Which God of his infinite mercy grant, *&c.*

SER-

SERMON XX.

isobedience to the Commandments of God a mark of Unbelief.

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1 JOHN II. 4.

e that ſaith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar.

WHEN we conſider the truth and certainty of the Chri-
ſtian Religion, the reaſonableneſs of thoſe duties, which
it exacts; the greatneſs of thoſe ends, which it pro-
poſes; the ſuitableneſs of thoſe means which it pre-
ſcribes; the glory of thoſe rewards which it promiſes;
and the terror of thoſe puniſhments which it threatens; when we conſider
all theſe things ſeriouſly and calmly, and at the ſame time look upon man
as a reaſonable creature, ſenſible of what is right or wrong; convenient
or inconvenient; good or evil; apprehenſive of his intereſt; and apt to
wrought upon by hopes and fears; we are at a great loſs to account
the wicked and impenitent lives of many of thoſe, who profeſs this
y faith; we cannot conceive it poſſible, that men convinc'd of the
h of the Chriſtian Religion, ſhould in their lives be ſo little in-
nc'd by it; we cannot imagine, how it comes to paſs, that they who
re to attain thoſe ends, which the Goſpel propoſes, ſhould neglect
e means, by which alone they know they are to be attain'd; we
not comprehend, how thoſe, who would willingly reap the rewards
mis'd to the obedient, ſhould conſtantly neglect to perform thoſe ea-
conditions, without the performance of which thoſe rewards are
to be expected; or how thoſe who would gladly eſcape the puniſh-
nts threatned to the diſobedient, ſhould knowingly and deliberately
mmit, and ſhould finally perſevere in an habitual practice of, thoſe
, which they at the ſame time are aſſur'd will unavoidably and irre-
verably expoſe them to eternal damnation.

Now I know no other way of accounting for this conduct, or of re conciling that manifeſt contradiction, which there is betwixt men's avow'd principles, and practices; betwixt their profeſſions, and thei actions; betwixt what they pretend to believe, and what we ſee they do, than by ſuppoſing it to be a miſtake in us, to conclude that theſe men do really believe the truths of the Goſpel, becauſe they profeſs t believe them; that they are inwardly Chriſtians, becauſe they are b ptiz'd into the faith of Chriſt; and that they do in their minds give firm aſſent to thoſe Goſpel-truths, which by their words they decla themſelves to be fully aſſur'd of. For if it be poſſible for men to i poſe upon others, and even upon themſelves, in the profeſſions of th faith; if they do not after all firmly believe, what they ſay they belie and what perhaps they think they believe; if their belief of the doctrin of the Goſpel be not firm, but wavering; if it be not conſtant, but te porary; if it be not univerſal, but partial; if they only gueſs, that t Goſpel may poſſibly be true, but are not ſure, that it is undoubte true; if at ſome times they are ſatisfied of the truth of it, and at oth times call it into queſtion; if they are convinc'd only of ſome trut contain'd in the Goſpel, but do not embrace all the truths which a there deliver'd; then it is eaſie enough to comprehend, how they may g on in an impenitent courſe, nothwithſtanding ſuch a weak, ſuch an u ſteady, ſuch a partial faith. For it is no wonder at all, that a man ſhoul prefer the ſinful pleaſures or profits of this world to the bleſſings *pro-* mis'd in the next, whilſt he only believes it poſſible, but is not abſo lutely certain, that there is another world; it is not at all ſtrange that one who ſometimes believes the Goſpel, and at other times diſbe lieves it, ſhould allow himſelf in any forbidden action at thoſe times that he believes it not; nor can we be ſurpris'd that he who embrac ſome truths of the Goſpel, and rejects others, ſhould be ſway'd by th truths which he receives, and in the mean time be not at all influen by thoſe which he rejects.

If men had that faith which the Goſpel requires, they would th alſo perform that obedience which the Goſpel exacts. *To know* Chr is in the language of the Scripture to believe in Chriſt, to receive th doctrines for true, which Chriſt in his Goſpel hath reveal'd; *he that ſa he* thus *knoweth* or believeth in *Chriſt, and keepeth not his command ments*, is by our Apoſtle declar'd to be *a liar*; he affirms that to be tru which is falſe; he ſaith he knows Chriſt, whom he doth not know; that h believes in Chriſt, in whom he doth not believe; for if he did truly kno Chriſt, if he did rightly believe in him, he would keep his command ments: but he doth not keep his commandments, he is therefore d ſtitute of knowledge: he is a ſinner, he is therefore an unbeliever. S that the aſſertion here laid down amounts to this; there is an invincib oppoſition between our Chriſtian belief, and a ſinful life; there is an i ſeparable connexion between true faith and holineſs. Every one wh believes the Goſpel of Chriſt, will keep the commandments of Chriſt no one who tranſgreſſeth the laws of Chriſt, doth ſincerely believe th Goſpel.

For the confirmation of theſe great truths, which have ſo imme diate an influence upon our lives, I ſhall in the plaineſt and moſt con- vincing manner I can, ſhew unto you,

I. That

I. That the Chriſtian Faith is inconſiſtent with a ſtate of ſin.

II. That it is inſeparable from a ſtate of holineſs.

And, *Firſt*, The Chriſtian Faith is inconſiſtent with a ſtate of ſin.

The holy Scripture doth every where abound with very large en-niums of faith; but theſe commendations which are there given of would not of right belong to it, if it were conſiſtent with a ſinful rſe of life; for ſin is as much condemn'd in Scripture, as faith is ex-'d. That faith therefore, which is ſo much applauded, muſt neceſ-y be incompatible with thoſe ſins, which are at the ſame time de-d to be abominable. We are taught in Scripture, that *Chriſt dwells* Eph. 3. 17. *ur hearts by faith*; that *by faith we are adopted to be the ſons of* Gal. 3. 26. *d*; that *faith juſtifies us*; that *faith entitles us to eternal life*: but Rom. 3. 28. are aſſur'd by the ſame Scriptures, that Chriſt dwells not in the hearts impenitent ſinners; that they are not the ſons of God; that they not juſtified; that they are not entitled to eternal life. Now how theſe advantages belong to faith, and ſinners be excluded from theſe advantages, if it be poſſible for men to have this faith, and yet he ſame time to continue habitual ſinners? Many and gracious are promiſes, which the Goſpel makes to faith; manifold and terrible the threats, which the ſame Goſpel thunders out againſt *all workers iquity*. Now how ſhall we reconcile theſe promiſes and theſe threats, ith be reconcilable with an habitual practice of ſin? For according is notion, what will become of thoſe, who are ſound in their faith, corrupt in their manners, who believe aright, and practiſe wrong? ll we ſay that they are in a ſtate of ſalvation? But what then will me of thoſe menaces, which God denounces againſt ſinners? Or, on other ſide, ſhall we ſay that they are in a ſtate of damnation? But re then is the truth of theſe promiſes, which are made to true be-ers? Is it not therefore plain, that to make the Scripture all of a e, to adjuſt theſe ſeeming differences between the ſeveral parts of o reconcile this apparent repugnance between its promiſes and its ts, we muſt own that this is a caſe which never did, never will, r can happen; and that in truth there is no ſuch thing as a truly elieving ſinner?

But this will appear yet more plainly, if we examine thoſe princi-s, by which an habitual ſinner acts, and thoſe doctrines, which the ſpel teaches; if we compare the judgments, which every ſuch ſinner ms in his mind, when he commits any deliberate ſin, and perſiſts it without repentance, with thoſe truths which Religion propoſes our belief; and having compar'd them together, ſhew the contrarie- there is between the principles by which ſinners actually do govern mſelves, and thoſe principles by which, according to the rules of Goſpel, they ought to govern themſelves.

Now it is plain, in the firſt place, that when any one commits a own and deliberate ſin, or when any one knowingly and wilfully con-ues in an impenitent courſe of ſinning, he commits ſuch ſin, and per-s in ſuch a wicked courſe, becauſe he judges either truly, or falſly; her with reaſon, or without reaſon; either for want of thinking at , or for lack of thinking ſo much as he ought; either by chance, by ſſion, or by prejudice, that in the preſent conjuncture, in which he all things conſider'd, it is better for him, it is more deſireable, it is more eligible to ſin, than not to ſin; to continue impenitent, tha to repent; to purſue the courſe that he is in, than to deſiſt; to defe repentance, than immediately to ſet about it. I don't ſay, that whe we reſolve to commit a ſin, the action which we enter upon is alway judg'd to be more juſt, more commendable, more pleaſant, more fittin more expedient, than the contrary; but only that it is by the ſinn deem'd to be, in ſome regard or other, it matters not what, more e gible. One man conducts himſelf by one of theſe conſiderations, a another perſon by another: one governs himſelf by intereſt, another glory, and a third by pleaſure: but every man, in every action he do in every choice he deliberately makes, propoſes to himſelf ſome go or other, either real or apparent; every one is perſwaded that he fi that good in the object he chuſes; every one thinks that what he chu is beſt, and for that reaſon he chuſes it; every ſinner therefore at t time that he ſins, thinks it better to commit a ſinful action, than refrain from it; better, if not in it ſelf, yet for him; better, if not a ſolutely, yet relatively; better, tho' not at another time, yet at t preſent conjuncture. Whether the good, which the wilful ſinner pr poſes to himſelf, be truly ſuch or not, is no matter, whilſt he judges to be good; whether he himſelf ſhould judge it ſuch at another time not, makes no difference, whilſt he judges it to be ſo at preſent; ſom moments ago perhaps he judg'd otherwiſe of it, and ſome moments henc he will again judge otherwiſe of it; but at that very moment when he chuſes it, he looks upon it to be worthy of his choice: ſhould another perſon do the ſame action, he would plainly ſee, that he choſe amiſs but when he himſelf chuſes it, he is ſatisfied with the choice he makes were he in other circumſtances, he would think it better to forbear the action under debate, than to venture upon it; but in the preſent cri he thinks it better to do it, than to abſtain from it.

Now if ſinners, when they do knowingly and deliberately comm any ſin, do at the ſame time form in their minds this opinion, that is better to commit it, than not to commit it; if this judgment th form'd by them is oppoſite to the truths of the Goſpel; then is it pla that when they are guilty of a known ſin, they do wilfully entert ſuch opinions as are contrary to the doctrines of the Goſpel, and co ſequently are chargeable with Unbelief.

It remains therefore to be farther prov'd, that when ſinners ventu upon any known ſin, they judge it better to commit it, than not; an that when they thus judge, they deny the truth of what is plainly taug in the Goſpel of Chriſt. Now that men, whenever they act volunta- rily and with deliberation, do chuſe that, which at the time of thei chuſing it, they think to be beſt, is plainly prov'd from experience. Any one who attends to the workings of his own mind, and carefully ob ſerves what paſſes within himſelf, when he deliberates about any thing and after deliberation proceeds to act, plainly finds, that what, afte the reſult of his beſt thoughts, he reſolves upon, he therefore prefers becauſe, all things duly conſider'd, he apprehends it to be beſt. If th were not ſo, it would be to no purpoſe at all to deliberate; for the o ly uſe of deliberation, is to diſcover what is beſt; but if after a ma had found out what was beſt, he ſhould not chuſe it, this enquiry wou be wholly uſeleſs and impertinent.

Now if men always chuſe that, which they at the time of thei choice think to be beſt, it neceſſarily follows that ſinners, when the

wilully and deliberately tranſgreſs the Laws of God, do therefore tranſ- s them, becauſe at that time they are perſwaded it is better to vio- them, than to keep them; they prefer that temporal good, which promiſe to themſelves from their ſins, to that ſpiritual and eter- good, which the Scriptures promiſe to thoſe, who inviolably keep 's commandments. For after this manner do ſinners reaſon with nſelves, whenever with mature deliberation, and with malice pre- e, they wittingly and calmly break the laws of God: "It is true, that action, which I am going to commit, is ſinful and abominable: s true, that God has forbidden it under the penalty of damnation: s true that it will render me odious in the ſight of God, and lay open to the utmoſt effects of his diſpleaſure; I cannot but acknow- ge, that I ſhall by it wound my conſcience, do violence to my rea- , offend my Maker, and bid open defiance to my Redeemer and viour. Upon theſe conſiderations I ought to refrain from this ion: but then on the other ſide, I conſider, that it will be advan- eous to me, it will procure me eſteem, profit, or pleaſure. The ſpect of this eſteem, the view of this profit, the aſſurance of this aſure, are reaſons of weight enough to determine me to the choice it. I am ſenſible, that I ſhall diſpleaſe God by it, but I will re- t afterwards, and of his infinite mercy obtain pardon of my ſins, peace to my ſoul. I could wiſh that this eſteem, this profit, this aſure, which I am fond of, were to be compaſs'd without diſpleaſing d; but ſince they are not to be attain'd but by ſin, I will rather leaſe God, than not pleaſe my ſelf. For provided that I repent, ch I am reſolv'd ſome time or other to do, I ſhall loſe nothing, what I may eaſily recover. Whereas, if I ſhould let ſlip this op- tunity of taſting this pleaſure, of reaping this profit, of procuring my ſelf this honour, I am not ſure of finding another ſo favourable. m ſtill indeed alarm'd with the fear of damnation, which may over- e me, before I have time to repent, and ſeize upon me in the very act ſinning. But poſſibly what I have heard of the puniſhments of hell m the pulpit, what I have read of them in the Scriptures, what I e been taught of them from my infancy, what I have believ'd of em hitherto, what I don't wholly disbelieve of them at preſent, may er all be a miſtake; there may be no ſuch puniſhments reſerv'd for wicked, or they may be leſs grievous, leſs durable, leſs dreadful an they are repreſented. There is therefore this difference between e good, which my ſin will procure me, and the evil, with which threatens me, that the one is certain, the other not ſo ſure; the ood I am ſure of poſſeſſing, the evil I am not certain of ſuffering; had better therefore lay hold of the good which is within my reach, nd run the riſque of that miſchief, which may perhaps never reach e; or if it ever doth, yet it is at a great diſtance; but the good I aim is preſent, and at hand; I will therefore enjoy the preſent moment; will not trouble my ſelf with the thoughts of what may come ma- y ages hereafter: for all things being duly weigh'd, it is better for e in the preſent caſe to commit this ſin, than to abſtain from it.

THUS do the ungodly argue, reaſoning with themſelves, but not ght. For, not to enter now into a particular examination of theſe falſe aſonings; not to trouble our ſelves about the truth of thoſe premiſes, om whence they draw this wrong concluſion, or about the connexion tween the judgment which they form, and the principles from which they infer it; it ſuffices to our preſent purpoſe to ſhew, that this concluſion which ſinners make, and upon which they proceed, when they reſolve upon the commiſſion of any known ſin, is falſe, heretical, and diametrically oppoſite to the truths of the Goſpel; ſo that they who embrace ſuch falſe opinion, do at the ſame time wilfully, knowingly, and obſtinately reject the Goſpel truths; and are, ſo far forth as they do reject them, not orthodox, but heretical; not believers, but infidels; not diſciples of Chriſt, but open oppoſers of the truth of the Goſpel. For doth not the Goſpel lay down ſuch doctrines, as cannot be admitted without quitting this error, that it is better at any time to ſin, than not to ſin? And muſt not therefore the admiſſion of this error be the rejection of theſe truths? For are we not taught by the Chriſtian Religion, that nothing is more advantageous than virtue, innocence, and holineſs that there is no time more uſefully employ'd than that which is taken up in the ſervice of God? That the loſs of any one good work is ſo great, that the whole univerſe cannot repair it; that the love of God is the greateſt advantage, that it is poſſible for us to poſſeſs; and that the anger of God is the moſt terrible evil, that it is poſſible for us to feel; that it is infinitely more advantageous to us to be belov'd by God, than to poſſeſs all the goods of this world; that there is no ſin, which doth not offend God, and expoſe us to his indignation; that his indignation is the greateſt miſchief that can befal us, and by conſequence that all things being rightly conſider'd, it is incomparably more advantageous not to ſin, than to ſin; that ſin is directly oppoſite to our greateſt, to our trueſt, to our moſt laſting, to our everlaſting, intereſt; that to ſin againſt God is to ſin againſt our ſelves, and to go directly contrary to the inclinations of ſelf-love; that nothing is more pernicious, nothing more mean, nothing more infamous, nothing in the iſſue of it more painful than ſin; and that therefore there is no profit to be reap'd, no honour to be gain'd, no pleaſure to be expected from ſin, but ſuch as is over-balanc'd by the damage, by the infamy, by the torments, which it expoſes the ſinner to?

Is there any one ſo little converſant in the holy Scriptures, as not to be able to point out thoſe places of holy Writ, where theſe truths are taught? Do not the Law and the Goſpel, *Moſes* and Chriſt, the Prophets and the Apoſtles, all agree in the delivery of theſe truths? Do not theſe truths frequently occur in Scripture, and are they not expreſs'd there in ſuch plain terms, as to be underſtood by all readers? Are not all expoſitors agreed in the ſenſe of thoſe texts, wherein theſe doctrines are taught? Do not all the different ſects of Chriſtians, who are divided about other religious opinions, unanimouſly concur in the admiſſion of theſe? Are there any Caſuiſts ſo looſe and extravagant, as to call in queſtion theſe ſacred truths? Have any of the bold aſſerters of the doctrine of probability been ſo hardy as to reckon this amongſt their probable doctrines, that it is better at any time to ſin, than not to ſin? Hath this tenet any intrinſick, or any extrinſick probability? Is there any colour or ſhadow of reaſon to make it appear true? Or hath any author eminent for learning and piety vouch'd it to be true? If this tenet be true, muſt we not renounce the Goſpel as falſe, which ſo frequently, ſo expreſly, ſo importunately inculcates doctrines oppoſite to this ſentiment? Is it not the whole deſign of the Goſpel, to repreſent the inſeperable connexion there is between holineſs and happineſs, between ſin and miſery, and can therefore any one think it better to ſin, than

not

t to ſin, without ſubverting the very foundations of the Goſpel? For as
tain as it is, that there is a God, who regards the actions of men; that
approves the good, and deteſts the evil; that he *loveth the righteous*, Pſal. 146. 8.
d hateth all workers of iniquity; that after this life, there will be ano- Pſal. 5. 5.
r; that there will be a judgment, at which all ſhall appear; an hea-
n, to which ſome ſhall be exalted; and an hell, into which others
ll be caſt down; ſo certain is it, that obedience is at all times, in all
cumſtances, by all perſons, preferable to ſin; and conſequently the
iberate ſinner, who judges otherwiſe, and who would not, nor could
ſin, but that he judges otherwiſe, doth by ſo judging deny the fun-
nental truths of the Goſpel, and is therefore not injur'd by us, when
is charg'd with unbelief.

FROM what has been ſaid, we may, I think, ſafely conclude, that
ry man, who commits a known and deliberate ſin, acts viſibly againſt
faith, and falls into actual hereſy: and this hereſy, of which all ſin-
s are guilty, is much more intolerable than moſt of thoſe, which
generally look'd upon to be moſt dangerous and peſtilent; and which
refore are by all true believers moſt deteſted. For of theſe ſome on-
ſhock ſpeculative truths, which are on all ſides agreed to be of leſs
portance, than thoſe that are practical. Other errors which tend to
overthrow of practical truths, oppoſe them only indirectly, and by
h conſequences as thoſe, who embrace ſuch errors, diſavow: but this
or or hereſy by which ſinners are miſled, has an immediate and di-
tendency to the ſubverſion of all the ſaving truths of the Goſpel:
er hereſies may contribute to the growth of ſome ſins; this hereſy
ns a gap to all manner of ſin: the inconſiſtency of other errors with
doctrines of the Goſpel may not always be perceivable; the oppoſi-
n of this error to the whole tenor of the Goſpel is notorious: for the
ntenance of other errors, ſome ſpecious, tho' ſophiſtical, arguments
y be brought; for the defence of this error, no ſhadow of an argu-
nt can be brought, none is pretended to be brought. Without rea-
, without authority, againſt the reaſon of all mankind, againſt all
hority, human and divine, the deliberate ſinner judges it better to
mit ſin than not to commit it, and for this his falſe, this his ob-
ate miſjudging, is deſervedly chargeable with being a greater, and
re dangerous heretick, than thoſe whom he himſelf regards with the
ateſt averſion.

WE uſe to take our meaſures of the excuſableneſs or inexcuſable-
s of any error from the importance of thoſe truths which are op-
s'd, from the clearneſs of their revelation, and from the obſtinacy of
perſon, who embraces ſuch error; and if we proceed by theſe rules
judging of that error, which the habitual ſinner eſpouſes, we muſt
eds paſs the ſevereſt ſentence upon it, ſince no truths are more mo-
ntous, none more clearly reveal'd, than thoſe which he rejects; and
one ſhews more perverſeneſs, than he doth, in adhering obſtinate-
to his error, in ſpight of all the methods that are taken to reclaim
n. It would be eaſie, if neceſſary, to prove this infidelity, which is
arg'd upon all deliberate ſinners in groſs, againſt each rank and deno-
ination of ſinners in particular. As for inſtance, he who unjuſtly de-
ns the goods of another, which he knows in his conſcience he has
quir'd by evil methods, and to which therefore he has no right, ſhews
reby clearly, that he doth not think reſtitution to be an indiſpenſa-
duty, which yet is very certain, and very clearly decided by the Word

of God. A malicious and revengeful perſon, who obſtinately refuſes t be reconcil'd to his enemy, and who in the mean time dares to ap proach the houſe of God, and to appear at the holy altar, ſhews here by that he is not at all perſwaded of the truth of what our Apoſtle S *John* in this Epiſtle doth ſo often and ſo earneſtly inculcate, that every man, who hates his neighbour, is in a ſtate of ſin and damnation. A drunkard, who lives in an habitual courſe of rioting and intemperanc and who nevertheleſs is ſatisfied that he is in a ſtate of grace, becauſ as he pleads, he is only his own enemy, and injures no one but himſe manifeſtly ſhews, that he gives no credit at all to St. *Paul,* when h formally atteſts, that *no drunkard ſhall enter into the kingdom of he ven.* 1 Cor. 6. 10.

LET us ſuppoſe an opportunity of being charitable offer'd to a ſ did and covetous perſon; let the neceſſities of the perſon in want never ſo craving, and the riches of him, who is applied to, never ſuperfluous; let it be repreſented to him that by a ſmall and well-plac charity he may ſave an hungry wretch from ſtarving for want of neceſſ ry food; or, which is a more moving caſe, that he may ſave a numbe of poor ſouls from periſhing for lack of being inſtructed in the princ ples of their holy Religion; let him be told from St. *Paul,* that if he is *ready to give, and glad to diſtribute,* he *lays up for himſelf a go foundation againſt the day to come*; let him be aſſur'd from *Solomon,* that *he who hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord*; *and look, what he layeth out, it ſhall be paid him again,* and paid him an hundred-fold; ſo that he is ſure to lend, both upon good ſecurity, and at a great intereſt; let him be farther put in mind from the authority o one greater than *Solomon,* that the *treaſures he lays up on earth* ar liable to great hazards, becauſe *the ruſt or moth may corrupt them,* or *thieves may break thro' and ſteal*; *but that the treaſures which he lay up in heaven* are ſecure againſt all caſualties, becauſe *there neither ru nor moth doth corrupt, nor thieves break thro' and ſteal*: let it be rep ſented to him, that he runs no riſque at all in this adventure, ſince hi hopes of recompence are built upon the unmoveable foundations o God's juſtice and veracity; for *God is not unrighteous, that he ſhou forget his works and labour that proceedeth of love, which love he i cited to ſhew for his name's ſake, by miniſtring unto the ſaints*: let t theſe truths be ſet before him with never ſo much cloſeneſs of arg ment, never ſo great force of eloquence, never ſo powerful a way o perſwading, yet they ſhall make no manner of impreſſion upon hi he ſhall reject all theſe truths, tho' they are contain'd ſo plainly in th Goſpel which he profeſſes to believe, and hopes, as he ſaith, to be ſav' by: neither *Paul* nor *Solomon,* neither his Saviour nor his Maker, ſha gain credence with him, when they would perſwade him that it is fo his intereſt to be charitable; he, who would upon another occaſion l out his money upon the probable hopes of a ſmall gain, ſhall not pa with it upon the certain aſſurance which the Scriptures give him of eternal reward, and ſhall thereby plainly ſhew, that however he m believe other parts of the Goſpel, he is not at all ſatisfied of the tru of thoſe promiſes, which are made to the charitable.

1 Tim 6. 18, 19.

Prov. 19. 17.

Mat. 6. 19, 20.

Heb. 6. 10.

WHAT has been ſaid of the unjuſt, the revengeful, the intemperat and uncharitable, is applicable to ſinners of all kinds: ſome Goſpe truths there are which they obſtinately reject, and tho' in other poin they may be orthodox, yet in thoſe they are unbelievers. Thus do

ppear, as well by general arguments from the reaſon of the thing, as
induction from particulars, that all habitual ſinners are deſtitute of
e faith; that their diſobedience is grounded in unbelief; and that the
h, which receives all the truths of the Goſpel, without exception,
hout reſerve, and without partiality, is inconſiſtent with a ſtate
in.

I. It might eaſily be prov'd from the ſame general reaſonings, and
ſame way of inſtancing in particulars, that faith is alſo inſeparable
n holineſs; for he who truly believes all the truths of the Goſpel,
no more allow himſelf in the wilful omiſſion of what is there re-
'd, than in the wilful commiſſion of what is there forbidden; he can
more think it better to neglect a duty than to perform it, than he
think it better to commit a ſin than to abſtain from it; he as firm-
elieves that he ſhall finally periſh, if he perſiſts continually in ſins of
iſſion, as if he went on in the conſtant practice of ſins of commiſſion:
will be careful therefore, as to avoid that which is evil, ſo to cleave
that which is good; as to *put off the old man with his deeds,* ſo Col. 3. 9, 10.
ut on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and
holineſs. He who is fully perſwaded of every thing which God
reveal'd in the Goſpel, cannot but earneſtly deſire to ſave his own
l, and to eſcape eternal damnation. For one of thoſe truths, which
has moſt clearly and moſt expreſly reveal'd, is, that damnation
e greateſt of all miſeries, and ſalvation on the contrary the greateſt
d, that is poſſible, nay a greater than is poſſible, to be conceiv'd.

Now ſelf-love inclining us to avoid exquiſite miſery, and to purſue
unmixt happineſs, a man who loves himſelf, as all men do without ex-
ception, and is perſwaded of the truth of the Goſpel, cannot but take
all the methods that are there preſcrib'd for the eſcaping of eternal mi-
ſery, and for the attainment of eternal happineſs. The Chriſtian faith
aſſures him, that he is a ſinner, that his ſins deſerve hell, that they will
in his everlaſting ruin, if he doth not obtain pardon from the mer-
of God: he will therefore deſire this pardon, and neglect nothing,
ereby he may procure it. The Chriſtian faith farther aſſures him,
there is no other way of ſalvation but by Jeſus Chriſt alone; that
in order to ſalvation he muſt accept of that offer, which God hath made
by his Son: he will therefore gladly accept of that offer, and apply
himſelf to Jeſus Chriſt. The Chriſtian faith farther aſſures him, that
the offer, which God makes us of ſalvation thro' Chriſt, is a conditional
fer, and requires of us that we ſhould renounce all ſin, and abound
all manner of holineſs: he will therefore gladly accept of this con-
ion, and make it the earneſt endeavour of his life to fulfil it. The
riſtian faith doth ſtill farther aſſure him, that ſalvation ſhall be the
rtion of thoſe only, who perſevere unto the end: he will therefore,
hilſt he is thus perſwaded, *preſs* forwards *towards the mark, and with* Phil. 3. 14.
unwearied *patience run the race that is ſet before him,* that he may
partaker of the *prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus.* Heb. 12. 1.

Thus doth it appear, that he who believes all the truths of the
oſpel, will obſerve all the precepts of the Goſpel, and that a partial,
oken, and temporary obedience is always the ſign and effect of a par-
l, maim'd, and temporary faith. If therefore we would approve our
lves true believers, we muſt ſhew the orthodoxy of our opinions by
e ſanctity of our lives: he who continues in the practice of thoſe ſins
hich the Goſpel forbids, or the omiſſion of thoſe duties which the

Goſpel requires, whatever Creed he profeſſes, whatever Communion h be of, whatever Church he adheres to, how zealous ſoever he pretend to be for the truth, is all this while an heretick, and unbeliever: all th anathemas, which he in the warmth of his zeal pronounces againſt he reticks, will fall upon his own head: it is in vain for him to hope th the purity of his faith will make amends for the depravity of his li ſince the corruption of his manners is a certain proof that his faith i alſo impure: tho' he may impoſe upon men, or deceive himſelf, by outward profeſſion of the Chriſtian faith, which he in the mean time i wardly rejects; yet *God, who ſeeth not as man ſees, but ſearcheth th heart; who judges not according to the appearance, but judgeth righteo judgment,* finding in him an *evil heart of unbelief, will appoint him h portion with the unbelievers.*

SER-

SERMON XXI.

o Sins venial: but ſome Sins, if repented of, conſiſtent with a State of Grace.

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1 JOHN. III. 6.

Whoſoever abideth in him, ſinneth not; whoſoever ſinneth, hath not ſeen him, neither known him.

THERE are ſeveral paſſages in this Epiſtle of St. *John*, which at firſt ſight ſeem very harſh, difficult to be accounted for, and not eaſily reconcilable with the other parts of holy Writ. This Apoſtle agrees with all the other inſpir'd Writers in preſſing the neceſſity of an uniform obedience to God's holy Laws, and ſhewing the inconſiſtency there is between the hopes of everlaſting happineſs promis'd in the Goſpel, and the wilful continuance in any of thoſe ſinful courſes, that are forbidden by the ſame Goſpel. But this neceſſity of an entire obedience ſeems to be carried higher by this Apoſtle, than by any other; and indeed igher than human nature, aſſiſted by the ordinary meaſures of God's ace, is generally thought capable of reaching up to. For it ſhould em at firſt view, that, according to the principles of St. *John*, Chri ans are indiſpenſably oblig'd to an abſolute, ſpotleſs, unlimited per ction of holineſs; ſo that if at any time, in any one point, they do in e leaſt degree tranſgreſs the Laws of God, they are no longer mem rs of Chriſt, have no title to the privileges of the Goſpel, and con quently are excluded from all hopes of eternal ſalvation.

WE are all concern'd in intereſt to wiſh that this doctrine, which ſo uncomfortable, may not be ſtrictly and rigorouſly true; but we e not to judge of the truth of doctrines, according as they are agreeable or diſagreeable to our wiſhes and inclinations, but according as ey are conſonant or repugnant to divine revelation. If the Word of od, which is infallible, and which cannot deceive us, teaches us that e cannot at the ſame time be ſinners and Chriſtians; that, whenever we tranſgreſs the Laws of the Goſpel, we renounce all intereſt in Chriſt; we muſt not deny this to be true, becauſe it would be more for our comfort that it ſhould be falſe; we muſt not wreſt the Scriptures to ſuch a ſenſe, as we could deſire they were to be underſtood in, but muſt take them in that ſenſe, in which we have reaſon to think they were intended by the Holy Ghoſt who indited them. The truths of the Goſpel are firm and inflexible, and are not to be bent according to our deſires and wiſhes: we muſt not therefore bring down God's precepts to a lower pitch of perfection, than according to the known rules of conſtruction they will bear, that they may be more ſuitable to our practice; but we muſt endeavour to exalt our practice to the greateſt heigh we poſſibly can, that it may be more agreeable to the elevated perfection of God's precepts. But after all, be our endeavours of obedienc never ſo earneſt, ſincere, and vigorous; be we never ſo careful to ſummon together all our own powers, and to call in the auxiliaries of God's grace; yet ſtill we ſhall by our own experience find, what the Saints o God have, in all ages, humbly confeſs'd, and bitterly complain'd o that *in many things we offend*; and therefore if every ſin we commit, ſhuts us out from the merits of Chriſt, and conſequentially from the mercy of God, our caſe is deſperate, and we are irretrievably concluded under a remedileſs ſtate of everlaſting damnation.

Jam. 3. 2.

Such an uncomfortable doctrine, as this, is enough to to make our ears tingle, our hearts to fail us with fear, and all our joynts to tremble; and yet this doctrine, terrible as it is, may ſeem, at firſt appearance, to be expreſsly taught us in ſeveral places of this Epiſtle. Our Apoſtle having in the beginning of this chapter given us a ſhort deſcription of the joys of heaven, or, to ſpeak more properly, having intimated that they were ſuch as could not be deſcrib'd, nor conceiv'd by us in this imperfect ſtate, but muſt be enjoy'd, before they could be comprehended, the full comprehenſion of them making a part of the fruition, immediately adds, that *Every man that hath this hope, purifieth himſelf, even as he is pure.* Now if every one who hath this hope, doth thus purifie himſelf, it ſhould ſeem neceſſarily to follow, that he who is not thus pure, he who falls ſhort of the immaculate purity of God, is debarr'd from this hope; and then the condition of all mortals muſt be hopeleſs, it being impoſſible, that any creature ſhould ever arrive to the unſpotted purity of the holy Creator. To ſoften this harſh aſſertion, it is reaſonable, as well as uſual, to conſtrue it in a lower ſenſe; ſo that he may be ſaid to *purifie himſelf, even as God is pure,* who propoſes God's purity as a pattern, tho' he doth never riſe up to it; who ſtudies to reſemble God, tho' he may not hope to equal him, in holineſs; who endeavours after thoſe exalted degrees of ſanctity, which with all his endeavours he ſhall never be able to attain.

But then, by what follows, it ſhould ſeem, that not only an earneſt endeavour to avoid all manner of ſin, but the actual avoidance of it is exacted from us; that the only teſt of a ſincere endeavour is its ſucceſs; and that, if our endeavours after a conſummate holineſs are not ſucceſsful, we may from thence judge, that they were unſincere and inſufficient; that nothing leſs than immunity from all ſin can give us a firm aſſurance that we have any intereſt in Chriſt, or any plea to be partakers of that ſalvation, which he hath purchas'd for believers. For thus we are told in the words of the text, that *Whoſoever abideth in him*, that is in Chriſt, *ſinneth not*; *whoſoever ſinneth, hath not ſeen him,* *im, neither known him.* Now if *whoſoever abideth in Chriſt, ſinneth ot*, it is a conſequence, which how unwilling ſoever we may be to ake, we cannot but make therefrom, that whoſoever ſinneth doth ot abide in Chriſt; and what the penalty of not abiding in Chriſt is, e are taught by our Saviour himſelf in the Goſpel of our Apoſtle St. *ohn*, c.15.v.6. *If a man abide not in me, he is caſt forth as a branch, d is wither'd; and men gather them, and caſt them into the fire, d they are burn'd.* Exciſion and perdition, according to our Saviour, e the lot of all, who abide not in him; all ſinners, according to St. *hn*, are number'd amongſt thoſe who abide not in Chriſt; according erefore to theſe principles exciſion from Chriſt's Church, and eter- l deſtruction, ſhould ſeem to be the portion of all ſinners.

THIS denunciation of the miſerable condition of ſinners, dreadful as is, may ſeem to be repeated again and again in this Epiſtle: aſſoon St. *John* hath declar'd, in the former part of the text, that *whoſo- er abideth in Chriſt, ſinneth not*, tho' the inference from thence is ve- plain, that whoſoever ſinneth, abideth not in Chriſt; yet he doth t leave it to us to make that inference, but expreſly adds, in the lat- r part of the text, that *whoſoever ſinneth, hath not ſeen Chriſt, nei- er known him*; that is, is as much a ſtranger to the Goſpel, as much alien from the Chriſtian faith, as if he had never known any thing Chriſt, had never heard *the glad tidings of ſalvation*, that are preach'd his name. Now this cannot be underſtood literally, that he who nneth knows nothing of Chriſt, it being plain and undeniable matter fact, that ſeveral who have heard of Chriſt, ſeveral to whom the oſpel is preach'd, ſeveral who profeſs to believe the Goſpel, ſeveral hom we have no reaſon to ſuſpect of being unſincere in that profeſ- on, ſeveral who have no doubts of their own ſincerity in profeſſing e faith of Chriſt, do, notwithſtanding this their belief, commit ſome ns, and do not, upon the commiſſion of ſuch ſins, loſe all the know- dge of Chriſt, or revolt from the belief of the Goſpel; ſo that the ut- oſt which can poſſibly be underſtood by this aſſertion of the Apoſtle, t *whoſoever ſinneth hath not ſeen Chriſt, nor known Chriſt*, is this, 1 John 3.9. t he is in as dangerous a caſe, as if he had not heard of him, or own him; that his belief of the Goſpel will not avail him any thing, hen he comes to plead it at the bar of God's juſtice; that when ſen- nce comes to paſs upon him at the laſt day, it will be to no purpoſe r him to allege, that he was a diſciple of Chriſt; but that, notwith- anding his either pretended or real belief of the Goſpel, he ſhall, if he e a ſinner, have his final *portion with unbelievers.*

THESE harſh tenets, tho' they may ſeem to be countenanc'd by the tter of ſome texts in this Epiſtle, are contradicted by other plain de- arations of holy Writ, where the contrary doctrines are in expreſſions ore eaſie to be underſtood, and not ſo liable to be miſconſtrued, plain- y and frequently ſet forth. We need not appeal to the teſtimony of her Writers beſides St. *John* to ſhew, that theſe aſſertions of his are ot to be taken in their rigorous and ſtrict ſenſe, but admit of a more vourable conſtruction than the letter of them doth, at firſt view, ſeem o import. For this ſame author, who tells us that *whoſoever is born God, doth not commit ſin, and cannot commit ſin*, doth as expreſly ell us, c.1.v.8. that, *If we ſay that we have no ſin, we deceive our ſelves, nd the truth is not in us.* He there pronounces of himſelf, and of other hriſtians, that if they ſhould affirm they had no ſin, they would de-

ceive others; if they ſhould ſuppoſe they had no ſin, they would delude themſelves: they might therefore be guilty of ſome ſins, nay, they could not but be guilty of ſome ſins, ſince otherwiſe they might without a lie pronounce, without miſtake deem, themſelves guiltleſs. He himſelf, and thoſe others, whom he concludes under this guilt, were
1 John. 1. 3. at the ſame time Chriſtians; they had *fellowſhip with* him, and his *fellowſhip*, he ſaith, was *with the Father, and his Son Jeſus Chriſt*; it i therefore poſſible, that men may be guilty of ſome ſins, and yet not renounce all title to the privileges of the Goſpel; and conſequently, whe it is affirm'd in the text, that *Whoſoever abideth in Chriſt, ſinneth no* and *whoſoever ſinneth, hath not ſeen Chriſt, neither known him*, ſomething leſs muſt be underſtood, than that every the leaſt ſin, at any on time committed by a Chriſtian, reduces him to the ſtate of an unbeliever and ſhuts him out from having any ſhare in the all-ſufficient merits o Chriſt.

THAT we may not entertain ſuch an uncomfortable opinion as thi is, that the condition of thoſe who fall into ſin after their converſio to Chriſt is without hope, the ſame St. *John* hath pointed out to them a ſure method of reinſtating themſelves in God's favour, when he aſſures them, that if they *confeſs their ſins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive their ſins, and to cleanſe them from all unrighteouſneſs.* c. 1. v. 9. He is careful to repreſent to his readers the deformity of ſin, the danger o it, and its inconſiſtency with the profeſſions of a Chriſtian, that he might
1 John 2. 1. deter them from it; *theſe things*, ſaith he, *I write unto you that ye ſin not*: but becauſe he foreſaw, that after all theſe powerful perſwaſions, they would ſtill yield to the temptations of the evil one, and be carried away from their own ſtedfaſtneſs, that they might not upon any the leaſt omiſſion of their duty, or breach of God's commandment, be preſently overwhelm'd with the wretchleſsneſs of deſpair, he takes care im-
v. 1. 2. mediately to ſubjoyn, that *if any man ſin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our ſins; and not for ours only, but alſo for the ſins of the whole world*: Not for ours only, but ſtill for ours principally; not for ours in excluſion of others, but for ours in preference to others; at leaſt for ours as well as for others; for the ſins of us who believe, as well as for the ſins of the gentile and unbelieving world.

HOW peremptory ſoever therefore theſe paſſages of St. *John* may ſeem to be, yet it is plain, by comparing them with other paſſages o this ſame Epiſtle, that they do admit of, and muſt be underſtood with ſome reſtriction and abatement. For if it were true, that every ſin committed by a Chriſtian did ſhut the gates of heaven upon him, ſo a to make an entry thither impoſſible, there would be no room for diſtinction between a *ſin unto death* and *a ſin not unto death*; and ye this is a diſtinction, which St. *John* himſelf hath here made towards th cloſe of this Epiſtle; when directing thoſe to whom he wrote, for wha ſins of their brethren they ſhould, and for what they ſhould not, inter-
1 John. 5. 16. cede with God for pardon, he thus delivers himſelf; *if any man ſee hi brother ſin a ſin, which is not unto death, he ſhall ask, and he ſhal give him life, for them that ſin not unto death. There is a ſin unto*
v. 17. *death, I do not ſay that he ſhall pray for it. All unrighteouſneſs is ſin, and there is a ſin not unto death.* Now ſince this Apoſtle St. *John*, who is to be ſure conſiſtent with himſelf, and doth not in one place overthrow, what he eſtabliſhes in another, doth ſometimes ſeem to exclude

all

ſinners from the hopes of ſalvation thro' faith in Chriſt, and doth
other times plainly teach that all men are ſinners, and yet that all
not for that reaſon debarr'd from the hopes of everlaſting ſalvation,
will be very uſeful, not ſo much for reconciling theſe appearing in-
ſiſtencies, as for the quiet of our minds, the ſatisfaction of our con-
nces, and the regulation of our judgments, concerning our own ſpi-
al ſtate, to enquire ſomewhat more diſtinctly into this matter; and
etermine, according to ſuch lights as the Scripture affords us, what
are conſiſtent with the hopes of ſalvation, what other ſins are ut-
y deſtructive of it; or, which is all one, what ſinners may with all
ble aſſurance promiſe themſelves to be *heirs of ſalvation,* notwith-
ding their paſt ſins, what ſinners cannot without groſs preſumption
ect to be ſav'd, by reaſon of their ſins. Now all the doubts that can
ais'd about this weighty caſe, may, I think, in a good meaſure be
r'd, if we duly attend to theſe following propoſitions.

. No ſins committed by Chriſtians are ſo ſmall or inconſiderable in God's ſight, but that according to the rigour of divine juſtice they deſerve to be puniſh'd with everlaſting damnation.

I. Some ſins are in compariſon of others ſo ſmall, that, according to the gracious diſpenſation of the Goſpel, they will be forgiven, if repented of, tho' not forſaken.

II. Some ſins committed by Chriſtians are ſo great, that tho' their ſorrow for having committed them is never ſo deep, yet without actually forſaking them, they can have no well-grounded hopes of forgiveneſs.

V. No ſins committed by Chriſtians are ſo great, but that if ſincerely repented of, and timely forſaken, they will thro' the merits of Chriſt be forgiven.

From which premiſes it will follow, that ſo far as ſinners can be aſ-
'd, either that their ſins are of that leſſer kind which will be for-
en, tho' they are not entirely forſaken; or that if they are of a more
ous nature, they have repented of them and forſaken them; ſo far
no farther can they be rationally aſſur'd of their being in a ſtate of
ce, and *heirs of everlaſting ſalvation.*

To theſe I ſhall ſpeak in their order.

Firſt, No ſins committed by Chriſtians are ſo ſmall or inconſiderable
God's ſight, but that according to the rigour of divine juſtice they de-
ve to be puniſh'd with everlaſting damnation.

What actions are ſinful, and what are not; what puniſhments are
e to our ſins, and are threatned upon the commiſſion of them, we
n learn only from the holy Scriptures. There we are taught the mea-
res of our acting, and there we are warn'd what will be the conſe-
ence of our neglect to obſerve thoſe meaſures. God, who hath an
ſolute right to require of us what he pleaſes, and to diſpoſe of us as
pleaſes, hath there declar'd to us what we ought to do, and what, in
ſe of failure, we muſt expect to ſuffer. He hath given us righteous
ws; and to the breach of thoſe laws he hath annex'd ſevere penalties.
ow according to the rigour of the law, *Every one is accurſed that* Gal. 3. 10.
ntinueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law
do them. If this curſe could not in juſtice be executed, neither would
have been denounc'd by a wiſe and holy Law-giver; when therefore

this curſe is not executed upon any of thoſe ſinners, who in any the leaſt inſtance tranſgreſs the law, the reſpite of it is not matter of juſtice, but of favour; it is not what the ſinner can of right claim, but what the judge doth out of pure mercy vouchſafe to grant. We are requir'd Deut. 5. 32. to walk in that path which God hath chalk'd out to us, without *turning* either *to the right hand or to the left*: ſome who depart out of the right way, may make larger excurſions, and wander farther from the paths of holineſs, than others do; but all who tranſgreſs the bounds which God hath ſet, tho' they do not expatiate very far, yet by going the leaſt beyond their appointed line, lay themſelves open to God's diſpleaſure, and may in juſtice ſuffer the penalties of that law, whoſe Rom. 6. 23. directions they did not obſerve. *The wages of ſin* indefinitely, whether greater or leſs, *is death*; and as thoſe, who labour in God's vineyard longer or more than others, would have no reaſon to complain, that others ſhould be equally rewarded with them, becauſe they receive full recompence of their pains, and all that was promis'd them, when they were hired; ſo if any of thoſe, who having wrought leſs under the dominion of Satan, ſhould receive the ſame wages with them that have done him the moſt faithful and conſtant ſervice, they would have no reaſon to complain of injuſtice, becauſe they would receive no more than is their due; would ſuffer no more, than what they were forewarn'd of before they ſet about their work.

THERE is no doubt but an holy and juſt God will, with the utmoſt exactneſs, proportion the puniſhments of ſinners according to their ſeveral demerits; that he will *weigh* them all *in an even balance*; and that as much as the ſins of ſome men do out-weigh the ſins of others, ſo much heavier ſhall their ſufferings be in the day of vengeance. But this inequality of puniſhments in proportion to the diſparity of men's ſins might be preſerv'd, tho' everlaſting miſery ſhould be the lot of all ſinners; thoſe torments, whoſe duration was the ſame, might yet differ much from each other in kind, or in degree; tho' the extent of them were ſuppos'd to be equal, yet the intenſeneſs or vehemence of them Iſai. 51. 17. might be very unequal; tho' all ſhould *drink at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury*, yet the draught of ſome might be either more ſparing, or leſs bitter, than that of others; and whilſt thoſe who had been moderately wicked did but juſt taſte of this cup, it might be the peculiar doom of abominable and flagitious ſinners, to *drink the very dregs of the cup of trembling, and to wring them out*. We need not therefore, in order to the vindication of God's juſtice, coin an imaginary diſtinction between ſins mortal and venial; and boldly aſſert, that tho' ſome ſins are in their own nature ſuch, as juſtly to deſerve eternal puniſhment, yet that others are in their kind ſo very light and trivial, that it is not conſiſtent with the juſtice of God to puniſh them with everlaſting deſtruction.

THAT in the event ſome ſins will not be recompenc'd with death eternal, whilſt others of a deeper die and blacker complexion will certainly expoſe the tranſgreſſor to everlaſting torments, is on all hands readily allow'd; but that this difference ariſes from the different nature and kind of the ſins thus diſtinguiſh'd in their puniſhments; that thoſe ſins, which are comparatively lighter than others, ſo as not equally to provoke God's wrath, are alſo poſitively light, ſo as not at all to expoſe us to his diſpleaſure; that thoſe leſs grievous ſins, which in fact are not puniſh'd with everlaſting death, could not of right be ſo puniſh'd; that

thoſe,

ſe, who have been guilty of theſe lighter ſins, can challenge an ac-
ittal at the hands of a righteous judge, and need not ſue for it, thro'
merits of a compaſſionate Saviour; that thoſe, who have been moſt
eful to obſerve all the commandments of God, and to cleanſe them-
ves from all ſin, can ſafely inſiſt upon their own innocence, or de-
nd a releaſe from thoſe leſſer faults, into which they have at any
e thro' infirmity fallen; that any of us, when we reflect upon our
lives, and find that *we are not as other men are, extortioners, un-* Luke 18. 11.
, adulterers, or the like, but that the ſins we have been guilty of, are
e of a leſs heinous kind, ſuch as we have been betray'd into thro' the
kneſs of our nature, can upon this account ſafely ask God *to judge*
ccording to our righteouſneſs, and according to the integrity that is
s; and are not rather neceſſitated to have recourſe to his infinite
cy, and with dejected eyes and hearts to ſmite upon our breaſts,
with the *publican* to ſay in all humility, *God be merciful to me a ſin-* v. 13.
, is what, we think, cannot without great arrogance and preſumption,
hout forgetting the diſtance between the Almighty God and ſinful
t and aſhes, without an over-weening opinion of our ſelves, and our
n ſanctity, and a mean opinion of God's majeſty, power, and holi-
s, be affirm'd or believ'd. But then, tho' no ſins committed by
riſtians are ſo ſmall and inconſiderable in God's ſight, but that, if he
ſevere *to mark what is done amiſs,* he might juſtly puniſh them
h everlaſting damnation; yet we may to our great comfort conſider,
the
Second PLACE, that ſome ſins are in compariſon of others ſo ſmall,
according to the gracious diſpenſation of the Goſpel, they will be
iven, and not puniſh'd with eternal death, if they are repented of,
they are not forſaken.

WHEN we deny any ſins to be for their own ſakes, and on account
their own intrinſick ſmallneſs, wholly excuſable; when we affirm all,
hout diſtinction of great or little, light or heinous, to be big enough
ſink us into *the depths of hell,* unleſs God's mercy had interven'd,
only obſerve, how God in juſtice may, not how in the bowels of
npaſſion he will, deal with ſinners. Such is the immaculate purity
God, that he cannot without abhorrence behold evil, he cannot with-
the utmoſt deteſtation look upon any, even the leaſt iniquity; but
en on the other ſide, ſuch is the unbounded mercy of God, that thoſe
s, which in the rigour of his juſtice he might avenge to the utmoſt,
the multitude of his mercies he will graciouſly overlook. *As the* Pſal. 103. 11.
eaven is high above the earth, ſo great is his mercy toward them that
ar him; and becauſe of this his tranſcendent mercy, *he dealeth not* v. 10.
ith us after our ſins, nor rewardeth us according to our iniquities.

GOD treats with his ſons, whom he hath adopted in Chriſt, and re-
nerated by his ſpirit, not according to the ſeverity of the Law, but
ccording to the milder and gentler covenant of the Goſpel. Tho' he
oth not approve, yet he tolerates in them ſome lighter ſins, which
hey are hurried into by the violence of temptations, or which they
nwillingly or unwittingly commit thro' an invincible ignorance, or thro'
he unavoidable infirmity of their nature. Tho' therefore they ſhould
ot be able with their utmoſt diligence to avoid theſe leſſer ſins, tho'
hey ſhould daily fall into them, tho' they ſhould at laſt die in them;
et God in mercy will not deem them unworthy to be admitted into
eaven, or to be partakers of endleſs bliſs and glory. Such ſins as theſe,

conſiſt with a good conſcience, and with the duty of ſincerity, and wit that meaſure of holineſs, which God exacts of us in this life as a neceſſary and indiſpenſable condition of our ſeeing and enjoying him, and o our being happy in that beatifick viſion in the life to come. Such ſi as theſe, being not the wilful objects of our choice, but the unavoidable defects of our nature; being ſuch as before we commit them, w endeavour to eſcape, but cannot with all our endeavours always eſcape being ſuch as, when we commit them, we diſapprove, tho' by an inc rable corruption of our faculties we find our ſelves, as it were, neceſſitat to do what we hate; ſuch laſtly as after we have committed, we do earne ly repent of, and are heartily ſorry for, but after our earneſt repentanc and hearty ſorrow, do involuntarily relapſe into again; being thus, ſay, circumſtantiated, they are not ſo heinous or provoking, as make a breach between us and our God; we may notwithſtanding ſu failings as theſe have peace of conſcience, and *joy in the Holy Gho* We need not aſtoniſh our ſelves with deſponding fears of being co demn'd to eternal miſery, becauſe we cannot throughly purge our ſelv from theſe ſpots: thoſe Saints, who are already admitted to the glori of heaven, have found an entrance thither, tho' they were not, whil they were cloath'd with fleſh and blood, without ſuch blemiſhes as theſe; when therefore we read that *there ſhall in no wiſe enter into the heavenly Jeruſalem any thing that defileth*, we muſt either think, that th Kingdom of heaven will be always deſolate and unpeopled, or that ſuch ſlips and imperfections as have been now treated of, are not to be numbred amongſt thoſe defilements, which will unqualifie Chriſtians to *abide in God's tabernacle*, or to *dwell in his holy hill.* But what hath bee ſaid of involuntary ſins, of unavoidable infirmities, of unchoſen defects, of ſuch transgreſſions of the divine Law, as the very beſt men are guilty of, muſt not be applied to the caſe of wilful, bold, preſumptuous, profligate ſinners. For, in the Rev. 21. 27.

Third PLACE, ſome ſins committed by Chriſtians are ſo great, tha without actually forſaking of them, and cleanſing themſelves from them, they can have no ſure hopes of forgiveneſs.

Tho' we don't allow the diſtinction, we ſo often meet with in the P *piſh* Writers, of ſins in their own nature mortal and damnable, and ſi even without any interpoſition of God's mercy, venial and pardonabl because, as underſtood by them, it ſeems to us contrary to the doctrin of holy Writ, and becauſe it is abus'd to very evil and wicked purpoſ both by falſe guides, who rank the moſt enormous crimes amongſt venial faults, and by ignorant people, who, without being miſled, are of themſelves too apt to catch at all notions, which tend to *excuſe* or extenuate thoſe ſins their conſciences charge them with; yet, we are far from aſſerting, that the guilt of all ſins is equal, or that the ſame degrees of remorſe, or methods of repentance will ſuffice for the blotting out ſome, which God is pleas'd to accept for the pardon of other Plain it is, both from reaſon and from Scripture, from the nature o things, and from the light of God's Word, that there are ſome ſins of more heinous kind, and more odious ſort, than others; which are no compatible with a good conſcience, or with that meaſure and ſtandard of righteouſneſs and holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee God; to which we are call'd by the preaching of the Goſpel, and to which all, who are truly pious and ſincere actually do, and all to whom the Goſpel is reveal'd, thro' the grace of Chriſt concurring with their endeavours,

poſſibly

ſibly may arrive. Hence is it, that the Goſpel of grace it ſelf, tho'
e a diſpenſation full of mercy and favour, yet it peremptorily declares
kingdom of heaven to be ſhut up againſt all, who cuſtomarily commit
h ſins, and are by death ſurpris'd before they have reſcued themſelves
m them by an hearty repentance, and thorough reformation. Thoſe,
o give way to ſuch enormous ſins as theſe, and do for any time con-
e in them, whilſt they ſo continue, are liable to the penalty of eternal
th; the ſword of divine vengeance hangs over their heads, and aſſoon
he thread of life, which keeps it up, fails, their *end is deſtruction*;
ſentence is already gone out againſt them, and nothing but the un-
ted mercy of God doth defer, nothing ſhort of breaking off their
by righteouſneſs can long prevent, its execution; whilſt they are
his poſture of ſoul, they can have no ſolid peace of conſcience, no
onal hopes of ſalvation, no real participation of that *joy*, which is Gal. 5. 22.
fruit of the Spirit, and which none have any juſt title to, but thoſe
whom the other fruits of the Spirit do flouriſh and abound.

HAT we might not fondly entertain any hopes of ſalvation, whilſt
indulge our ſelves in the practice of ſuch heinous ſins as theſe, St.
ul hath given us, tho' not a complete and exact catalogue of them,
ſuch a liſt, by the help of which we may be able ſufficiently to di-
guiſh them, and hath at the ſame time declar'd ſo expreſly the di-
repugnances of them to the indiſpenſable terms of the Evangelical
enant, that there is no room left for any one who believes the Scri-
res to think that he can get into heaven, with the guilt of theſe ſins
ompaſſing him. *The works of the fleſh are manifeſt, which are* Gal. 5. 19, 20,21.
e, adultery, fornication, uncleanneſs, laſciviouſneſs, idolatry, witch-
ft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies,
yings, murder, drunkenneſs, revellings, and ſuch like; of the which
ll you before, as I have alſo told you in time paſt, that they which
ſuch things ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God. Whatever diſputes
re may be, whether all ſins are mortal or not, it is agreed on all hands,
t theſe, and ſuch as theſe, are ſo in a more ſingular and eſpecial man-
; other leſſer ſins may deſerve eternal puniſhment, but theſe, if con-
ed in, will inevitably bring it upon us; againſt other ſins we may
lter our ſelves in the mercy of God, and in the merits of Chriſt,
againſt the crying guilt of theſe ſins, if we live and die in them,
n infinite mercy it ſelf will not cover us, even Chriſt's all-ſufficient
erits, we dare not ſay cannot, but we may ſay, will not ſkreen us.
t that thoſe, whoſe wounded conſciences accuſe them of having com-
itted ſuch ſins as theſe, and of being therefore obnoxious to divine
ngeance, may not hereupon be ſwallow'd up in deſpair, they may
onſider, what we in the

Fourth PLACE obſerv'd, that no ſins committed by Chriſtians are ſo
eat, but that, if ſincerely repented of, and timely forſaken, they will
ro' the merits of Chriſt be forgiven.

WHEN our Saviour tells us, that *except we repent, we ſhall* inevi- Luke 13. 3.
bly *periſh*, under this ſevere threat there is couch'd a gracious promiſe,
at if we repent, we ſhall certainly not periſh. That none, who con-
nue obſtinately in the commiſſion of ſins, might delude themſelves
ith the vain expectations of pardon, St. *Paul* hath warn'd them not
o be deceiv'd; *Be not deceiv'd*, ſaith he, *neither fornicators, nor ido-* 1 Cor.6.9, 10.
aters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves with
mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall

inherit the kingdom of God. But on the other ſide, that none, wh have been guilty of the moſt abominable ſins, might, upon leaving the ſins, and applying themſelves to the mercy of God, thro' the merits o
v. 11. Chriſt, for forgiveneſs, deſpair of pardon, he immediately ſubjoyns, *ſuc were ſome of you; but ye are waſh'd, but ye are ſanctified, but y are juſtified, in the name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of ou God.*

We have not, perhaps, any where in the holy Scripture a ſever charge drawn up againſt ſinners, than that ſolemn arraignment of t rebellious *Iſraelites*, which we find recorded by the Prophet *Iſaiah* ch 1ſt. *Hear, O heavens,* ſaith he, *and give ear, O earth: for the Lo hath ſpoken, I have nouriſh'd and brought up children, and they b rebelled againſt me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his m ſter's crib: but Iſrael doth not know, my people doth not conſider. A ſinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a ſeed of evil doers, childr that are corrupters, they have forſaken the Lord, they have provo the holy One of Iſrael unto anger, they are gone away backward.* I chap. 1. v. 2, 3, 4. So aggravated, ſo inveterate, ſo incurable were th ſins, that they were not to be cleans'd from them by the common an
v. 11. eſtabliſh'd methods of expiation. *To what purpoſe is the multitu your ſacrifices unto me, ſaith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-offerin of rams, and the fat of fed beaſts, and I delight not in the blood of bu locks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.* Supplications and prayers ſhould ſeem to be the moſt likely means of reconciling an offended God; but theſe
v. 13. were ſo far from mitigating his wrath, that they inflam'd it: *The callin of aſſemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the ſolemn meetin*
v. 14. *Your new-moons, and your appointed feaſts my ſoul hateth: they ar*
v. 15. *a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them. When ye ſpread fort your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make man prayers, I will not hear.* Thus raging was their ſpiritual diſeaſe, an thus ineffectual were all applications for their recovery. But ſtill there was one remedy left for their being heal'd, which the phyſician of ſoul preſcrib'd to them, and which we find deliver'd down to us, for the com fort, and for the benefit of all thoſe, who in the ſame caſe ſhould wa
v. 16. the ſame ſalutary preſcription: *Waſh ye, make you clean, put away t evil of your doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to d well*; and then, upon the performance of theſe conditions, it is added,
v. 18. *tho' your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be white as ſnow*; *tho' they be re like crimſon, they ſhall be as wooll.*

That this amendment of life in order to the remiſſion of their ſins, was not appropriate to the particular caſe of the rebellious *Iſraelites*; that what was accepted by God from them as a motive to his forgiving them, will avail for the remiſſion of all other ſins, and for the acquittal of all other ſinners; that it is the ſtanding rule of God's procedure with ſinners, to abſolve them upon their ceaſing to do evil, and not to ab ſolve them till they ſo ceaſe, is plain from that general aphoriſm laid down by the Prophet *Ezekiel*, applicable to all ſinners, of all kinds, a
Ezek. 18. 27, 28. all times, in all circumſtances; *When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedneſs that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſave his ſoul alive. Becauſe he conſidereth, and turneth away from all his tranſgreſſions that he hath committed, he ſhall ſurely live, he ſhall not die.*

Thus have I, with the utmoſt plainneſs I could, laid down theſe
t and fundamental rules, by which we muſt guide our ſelves in the
gment we form concerning, and in the methods we muſt uſe for aſ-
aining, our ſpiritual eſtate. All ſins whatſoever, whether ſmall or
t, do render us obnoxious to God's wrath, and therefore we are ob-
for all, without exception, humbly to implore his pardon. Some
are of a leſs heinous kind, ſuch as we cannot with all our induſtry at
imes avoid, and for theſe, whilſt we endeavour to avoid them, tho'
endeavour be ſucceſsleſs, we may, for the ſake of Chriſt, upon a gene-
epentance, hope for forgiveneſs. Other ſins are of a more grievous
which when we committed, we might thro' the grace of God have
led, and which for the future, if we be not wanting to our ſelves, we
avoid; and for theſe therefore whilſt we continue in them, we
not hope to be forgiven. Theſe very ſins, tho' at preſent they ex-
e us from God's favour, yet they do not put us under an impoſſibili-
f regaining it; ſo that if we heartily repent of them, and for the
to come totally abſtain from them, we may ſtill, thro' the gra-
diſpenſation of the Goſpel, hope for abſolution.

hoſoever ſinneth, thro' unavoidable ignorance, or infirmity, doth
e in Chriſt; and his title to the mercies of Chriſt is not by ſuch in-
ntary ſins at all interrupted; *whoſoever ſinneth* wilfully, and with
gh hand, *abideth not in Chriſt* whilſt he continues in ſuch wilful
but then tho' his title to the kingdom of heaven be ſuſpended,
ay, by a timely converſion to the *paths of righteouſneſs*, be reco-
; *whoſoever ſinneth* wilfully and finally, whoſoever liveth in the
ual practice of ſin, and dies without ſincere repentance, he *abideth*
Chriſt, and hath no foederal right to the privileges of the Goſpel;
ho thus ſinneth, is in the ſame deſtitute, forlorn, hopeleſs condi-
as if he had *neither ſeen him, nor known him*. From which un-
fortable ſtate God of his infinite mercy deliver us all.

SERMON XXII.

Jephthah's Vow.

Judges XI. 39.

And it came to paſs at the end of two months, that ſhe return unto her father, who did with her according to his Vow whic he had vowed.

IN ſpeaking to theſe words I ſhall endeavour,

I. To ſtate the fact; what it was that is here ſaid to have b done by *Jephthah*.

II. I ſhall enquire into the quality of the fact; whether w is here ſaid to have been done by him, was well or ill done; w ther it is to be commended and imitated, or is to be condemn'd abhorr'd by us; or, ſuppoſing it criminal, how far it admits excuſe, ſo as to appear, tho' not altogether good or innocent, leſs ſinful and abominable.

III. I ſhall from what ſhall have been ſaid on the two former hea make ſome practical inferences for our own uſe and inſtruction.

Firſt THEN I am to ſtate the fact; what it was that is here to have been done by *Jephthah*.

AND the determination of this ſhould, one would think, admit no great difficulty. No one who reads this hiſtory, as it is in this ch ter plainly related by the writer of it, without conſulting any co ment, would, I believe, make the leaſt doubt, but that *Jephthah* really ſacrifice his daughter. In this verſe we are told, that *he* *with his daughter, according to the vow which he had vow'd*; and we look back to the preceding part of the ſtory, we find, that his vo

v. 31. was conceiv'd in theſe words: *Whatſoever cometh forth of the doors my houſe to meet me, when I return in peace from the children* Ammon, *ſhall ſurely be the Lord's; and I will offer it up for a bur offeri*

ring. The vow, we ſee, was general and indefinite, *that what-*
ver ſhould come forth of the doors of his houſe to meet him, that *ſhould*
ly be the Lord's, and it ſhould be the Lord's *by being offer'd up for*
urnt-offering. By the ſequel of the ſtory it appears, that *his daughter* v. 34.
come out to meet him, upon his victorious return, *with timbrels and*
ces; that he was very much afflicted at the ſight of her; that the
ſe of this his trouble was, becauſe the vow, which was made in gene-
ral terms, was, by this her coming forth to meet him, determin'd to her
on; that he look'd upon his vow, whether rightly or not, to be in-
able; that how unwilling ſoever he might be to execute it, he thought
ould not with a ſafe conſcience but execute it; that ſhe gave her
conſent to the execution of it; that all ſhe ask'd of him was a re-
e of the execution for *two months*; that *at the end of* the *two months* v. 37.
came to her father; and that, upon her coming to him, *he did unto* v. 39.
according to his vow, which he had vow'd, that is, as one would
gine, that he offer'd her up for a burnt-offering to the Lord.

THE relation ſeems throughout to be very plain and expreſs; and if
ſome have queſtion'd, after all, whether *Jephthah* did truly ſacrifice
daughter or not, the ground of their doubt hath not been from any
curity or ambiguity in the relation, but from the ſuppos'd horror
he fact related. It is preſum'd that *Jephthah* ought not to have
e ſo; that he would not do, what he ought not to have done; that
might have kept his vow without ſacrificing his daughter; or that
ad better to have broken it, than thus to have kept it: and for theſe
ons it is urg'd, that how plain ſoever it may ſeem at firſt that he did
ſacrifice his daughter, we muſt ſtill believe that he did not; that we
try to put ſome other conſtruction upon the words, rather than
it of a ſenſe, which tho' the words manifeſtly imply, yet the thing
will not bear; that the words of this vow may be ſo interpreted, as not
intend any more, than that he would conſecrate to the ſervice of
, whatſoever or whomſoever he ſhould meet, which he might do
hout offering it up as a victim: and tho' this interpretation is not ſo
, and ſo agreeable to the obvious meaning of the words, as the other;
one would rather chooſe to allow of a forc'd interpretation, than to
k ſo brave and gallant a perſon as *Jephthah* guilty of ſo unnatural a
, as the ſacrificing his own daughter.

BUT now, notwithſtanding this plea, I cannot but judge thoſe expo-
rs miſtaken, who, to avoid the difficulties which they fancy would
e from the admiſſion of ſuch a fact as *Jephthah*'s ſacrificing his own
ghter, run into much greater difficulties by denying the truth of a
, which ſeems by the inſpir'd hiſtorian to be ſo plainly aſſerted. It
ne great prejudice againſt this expoſition, that it is new; none of
ancient verſions of the text do at all favour it; none of the ancient
oſitors of the Bible ever diſcover'd it. The Fathers of the Church
very much divided in their opinions about the fact here related,
ether it was good or ill; but they all unanimouſly agree in the truth
he fact, that *Jephthah* did really ſacrifice his daughter.

AN ancient and learned *Greek* Father gives us this account of the
tter: “The reaſon why *Jephthah* is numbred in the catalogue of ho-
y perſons by the author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, is this; he
ad pray'd for victory againſt his enemies; in order to obtain his re-
queſt, he made a general and indefinite vow of an euchariſtick offer-
ng, that whatſoever ſhould firſt meet him, when he ſhould return in

"from the war, he would offer up as an holocauſt to God. The Devil
"perceiving this vow to be conceiv'd in general terms, contriv'd how he
"might tempt *Jephthah* to be guilty of the breach of it: to this purpoſe
"he incited his only child to meet her father with timbrels and with
"dances, that *Jephthah* by ſparing his daughter might be forc'd to vio-
"late the religion of his vow. But the adverſary, who laid this ſnare, did
"not ſucceed in his attempt; *Jephthah* preferr'd the performance of his
"vow to the life of his daughter; and his piety towards his God pre-
"vail'd over his natural affection towards his child. God permitted he
"to be offer'd as a victim, not becauſe he was pleas'd with the ſheddin
"of human blood, but that poſterity might be warn'd how they mad
"ſuch general and undetermin'd vows. Many and great are the m
"chiefs that attend ſuch indefinite vows; for the prevention of whic
"in all future ages, God ſuffer'd *Jephthah*'s daughter to be made a v
"ctim. Not that this oblation was the firſt and primary intent eithe
"of God, or of *Jephthah*; but the fortuitous conſequence of ſuch a
"indefinite vow. But becauſe *Jephthah* did this out of a principle
"piety, therefore his memory is deſervedly celebrated in the catalogu
"of *Jewiſh* worthies". Whether this be a full vindication of *Jephtha*
or not, is not now the queſtion; but it is plain, that he who made it
had no doubt of the truth of *Jephthah*'s ſacrificing his daughter.

A CELEBRATED *Latin* Father differs widely from this *Greek* writer
in his ſentiments concerning the morality of this fact. He *obſerve*
that the Scriptures relate it, but do not commend it; that they no other
wiſe relate it, than they do other facts, which are there told, but no
approv'd; that as we are elſe-where told that *Judah* lay with his daugh
ter in law, ſo we are here told that *Jephthah* ſacrific'd his daughter
but that we have no more reaſon to think this action of *Jephthah*, tha
that of *Judah*, warrantable; that tho' the Patriarchs ſinn'd in ſome o
the actions related of them, God might make uſe of their ſins for the
inſtruction of his people; that God, who is infinitely good, doth even
out of the ſinful actions of men derive good, and make them types o
his mercies. As by *Judah*'s joyning himſelf to an harlot God migh
preſignifie his eſpouſal of the Gentiles to be his Church, who had b
fore been guilty of idolatry, which is ſpiritual whoredom; ſo by this
fact of *Jephthah* in ſacrificing his only daughter God might, in like
manner, prefigure his giving his only-begotten Son to be a ſacrifice for
the ſalvation of mankind. The carnal *Jews* look'd not beyond the v
ctims of beaſts; they did not carry their thoughts, as they ought t
have done, to the oblation of Chriſt. God therefore, by ſuch an u
uſual ſacrifice as this, rous'd their attentions: by *Jephthah*'s oblatio
of an only daughter God awaken'd them to the thoughts of that ato
ment, which was to be made by the ſacrifice of his only Son. By th
author the fact, you ſee, is as plainly condemn'd, as it was applaude
by the other; but ſtill the fact is by both ſuppos'd to be the offering o
his daughter as a victim, which is, for that reaſon, by the laſt-cited a
thor made a type of the ſacrifice of Chriſt.

THAT *Jephthah*'s daughter was thus ſacrific'd, is the unanimous o
nion of all the ancients: and with theſe ancient writers agree the comp
lers of the homiliesof our Church, as to the ſubſtance of the fact; whe
we read that "*Jephthah*, when God had given to him victory of the chil
"dren of *Ammon*, promis'd, of a fooliſh devotion, unto God, to off
"for a ſacrifice unto him that perſon, which of his own houſe ſhould fi

"mee

eet with him after his return home. By force of which fond and nadviſed oath he did ſlay his own and only daughter, which came ut of his houſe with mirth and joy to welcome him home". This refore is one juſt prejudice againſt that interpretation, which ſup- ſes *Jephthah* not to have ſacrific'd his daughter; that it is a novel e, contrary to the ſenſe, not only of our own Church, but alſo of all ient writers, as well *Jewiſh* as *Chriſtian*; firſt ſtarted by ſome fan- l *Rabbins* of a later age, and afterwards greedily laid hold of by ſome *iſh* writers, to favour their new doctrine concerning vows of a mo- ick and ſingle life.

For thoſe who will not allow that *Jephthah*'s vow extended to the ificing of what ſhould meet him, think that he intended no more by han that he would dedicate to the honour and ſervice of God, what- r creature or perſon ſhould firſt come out of the doors of his houſe meet him upon his return from the campaign; that therefore *Jeph- b* did actually fulfil this vow, not by ſacrificing his daughter, but conſecrating her as a perpetual virgin to God, by making her a re- e, and, in this ſenſe, ſending her out of the world. But this inter- tation is ſo far from having any foundation in the ſacred ſtory, that ſeems altogether repugnant to ſeveral circumſtances of this tranſa- n. For the vow of *Jephthah* is not here expreſs'd disjunctively, as e had left himſelf at liberty, either to ſacrifice what he ſhould meet, elſe to conſecrate it ſome other way to God's ſervice; but conjun- ely, *it ſhall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offer-* He did, we ſee, not only expreſs an intention of conſecrating it to 's honour; but alſo the manner in which he would ſo conſecrate it, wit, by offering it up as a victim to God. It muſt indeed be own'd, the particle, which we here render *and*, doth ſometimes ſignifie *or*: accordingly, tho' in the text of our Bibles we read the words thus, *it ll ſurely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering*; yet he margin it is obſerv'd, that it might have been tranſlated, *or I will r it up*. But tho' there are inſtances in Scripture, where this *He- w* particle is, without queſtion, to be taken, not in a copulative, in a disjunctive ſenſe, and is therefore by our *Engliſh* tranſlators htly render'd, not by the word *and*, but by the word *or*; yet it is uly obſerv'd by thoſe who are beſt ſkill'd in the *Hebrew* tongue, that h an explication can only take place, where the things thus disjoyn'd really diſtinct one from the other, but can have no room, where e doth manifeſtly include the other. It may very properly be ſaid, t *he who curſeth his father, or his mother, ſhall ſurely be put to ath*; but it could with no propriety of ſpeech be ſaid, that he who ſeth his parent, or his mother, ſhall ſurely be put to death: for ſince ent is a general word, which includes in it both father and mother, s very incongruous to mention either father or mother as diſtinct m the parent, both which are contain'd under the appellation of pa- t. So here, ſince *to be the Lord's*, or *to be conſecrated to the Lord*, general word which includes in it ſacrifices, all which undoubted- were the Lord's, and were conſecrated to the Lord, we cannot ima- e that *Jephthah* ſhould make ſuch an abſurd vow as this, that what- ver he ſhould meet, he would either conſecrate it to the Lord, or would offer it up as a victim to the Lord; that is in other words, ei- er it ſhould be the Lord's, or it ſhould be the Lord's. It is much ore congruous to all the rules of right ſpeaking and good ſenſe, to

Exod. 21. 17.

underſtand the words of *Jephthah* ſo, as that by promiſing *whatſoev he met ſhould be the Lord's,* he oblig'd himſelf in general to conſecra it to God; and by promiſing farther that *he would offer it up for burnt-offering,* he ſpecify'd the manner in which he would make this i tended conſecration.

If *Jephthah* meant no more by his vow, than that he would co ſecrate his daughter as a perpetual virgin to the ſervice of God, wh cauſe was there for *his renting his cloaths,* what occaſion for that l mentable complaint? *Alas, my daughter, thou haſt brought me ve* v. 35. *low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have open'd mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.* If *Jephthah* made only vow of celibacy for his daughter; if this vow made by the father o lig'd the child, who was not privy to it; if, in purſuance of this vo ſhe was bound to nothing more grievous than to lead a ſingle life; wh reaſon was there for bewailing this as a grievous calamity, which, a cording to their notions who advance this interpretation, is alwa eſteem'd a thing eminently glorious and honourable? Is the being ſh up as a recluſe, the being entred into the liſt of perpetual virgins, t being devoted to God's ſervice out of an act of religion, a matter o ſuch bitter complaint and lamentation? Was this ſo ſore an evil, a v. 38. affliction ſo extraordinary, that, not only before ſhe underwent it, ſh *and her companions ſhould for two months go up and down upon th* v. 40. *mountains to bewail it*; but that after ſhe had undergone it, *it ſhoul be a cuſtom in* Iſrael, *that the daughters of* Iſrael *ſhould meet yearly to lament the daughter of* Jephthah *the Gileadite four times an year*? I ſhe was actually put to death in execution of her father's vow, it i then very eaſy to underſtand, why the particular circumſtance of he dying without iſſue, when *ſhe was the only daughter of her father,* an he had no other proſpect of poſterity to keep up his family, and to pr ſerve the memory of his glorious atchievements, ſhould be repreſente as a remarkable aggravation of her violent and untimely death. Bu it ſeems very difficult to account for that bitter lamentation made b her father, by her ſelf, by her companions, and by all the daughters o *Iſrael* in ſucceeding times, if ſhe ſuffer'd no other, no ſorer puniſhme than that of being devoted, or, as thoſe of this opinion ſeem to rep ſent it, of being condemn'd, to a ſingle life.

Since therefore, as hath been obſerv'd, this explication is nove and therefore not to be over-haſtily embrac'd by thoſe, who have a reve rence for antiquity; ſince it is chiefly advanc'd by *Popiſh* writers, in fa vour of a *Popiſh* doctrine, and, for that reaſon, juſtly to be ſuſpected b us *Proteſtants*; ſince moreover, it renders the relation of this matter as it is here repreſented to us by the inſpir'd hiſtorian, confus'd, unin telligible, and unaccountable, and for that cauſe eſpecially deſerves t be rejected by all, who profeſs an eſteem and veneration for holy Writ I think we have ſufficient grounds to conclude, that when it is ſaid i the text, that *Jephthah did with his daughter according to his vo which he had vow'd,* we can underſtand no leſs, than that he did actu ly put her to death.

Whether he did well or ill in doing ſo, and if he did ill, how fa this action admits of an excuſe or extenuation, is the ſecond thing I propos'd to enquire.

It cannot I think be queſtion'd, but that if *Jephthah* had ſacrific his daughter without vowing that he would do ſo, he had been guilty

of

n unlawful and ſinful action. The only queſtion is, whether an an-
edent vow could make ſuch an alteration in this fact, as to render
neceſſary or lawful, which, without ſuch a vow, would be wicked
ſinful. Now a vow doth indeed ſo far alter the morality of hu-
actions, as to render thoſe actions obligatory, which were before
fferent; but it doth not, it cannot, ſo far change the nature of
and wrong, as to render that commendable or innocent, which,
ſuch vow had interven'd, had been culpable and unlawful. It is
ecept, both of natural and reveal'd religion, that men ſhould be
tual in the performance of all their promiſes; and this obligation
s ſtill much ſtronger in vows, which are promiſes made to God.
man may not deceive his neighbour, much more ought he to be
d of lying to his Maker. Among the laws given from God by *Mo-*
o the *Jews* this was one, that *if a man vow a vow unto the Lord,* Num. 30. 2.
wear an oath to bind his ſoul with a bond, he ſhall not break his
d, he ſhall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth. But
on the other hand, it is agreed by all ſober caſuiſts, that a vow
nly a conſtructive, not a deſtructive force, that is, that it can only
new obligation, where there was none before, or ſtrengthen a for-
one; but that it cannot cancel a former obligation, or ſuperin-
one that is repugnant to it. And the reaſon of this is plain, be-
by every obligation a right accrues to ſome one; for whoſoever
lig'd, is oblig'd to another; but it is utterly unjuſt, that by the
act of one perſon, the right of another ſhould be taken away with-
his conſent.

od hath an uncontrollable right to give laws to his creatures, to
mand the performance, or forbearance of ſuch and ſuch actions;
f men could by vows, voluntarily entred into, free themſelves from
obligation of God's Laws, they would then by an act of their own
ly defeat his authority. Whatever therefore is in it ſelf forbidden
od, and for that reaſon unlawful; whatſoever is againſt any pre-
of natural or reveal'd religion; whatſoever is repugnant to piety to-
s God, or to juſtice and charity towards our brethren; whatſoever
conſiſtent with thoſe relative duties, which men owe to one ano-
; whatſoever in ſhort is in any reſpect ſinful, cannot, by being made
matter of a vow, become juſtifiable. He therefore who hath vow'd
o, what cannot be done without ſin, is not by his vow oblig'd to
it; but notwithſtanding his vow, oblig'd not to do it. In the mak-
ſuch an unlawful vow there is great obliquity; and this obliquity is
leſſen'd, but aggravated by the keeping of it. Poſſible indeed it is,
there may be a great fault in making a vow, which it may be no
t, but a duty, when made, to keep. For a vow may be unlawful,
er in reſpect of the act of vowing, or of the thing vow'd: a vow un-
ful only in the former regard, as being not entred into with ſufficient
beration, and upon good motives, may however be obligatory; and
efore it is a great miſtake, which ſome people too eaſily run into, to
k it a ſufficient diſcharge from the performance of a vow, that they
red upon it raſhly: but a vow that is unlawful in the latter ſenſe, ſo
hat the matter of it is ſinful, can never bind the conſcience.

Since therefore the thing vow'd by *Jephthah* ſeems to have been
it ſelf unlawful; ſince his daughter was innocent, and had done nothing
deſerve death; ſince the running out to meet her father with joy and
ngratulation was an act of piety, which ſeem'd to intitle her to his

love and favour; ſince the natural affection of a father towards his chil muſt be ſtifled, before he could give way to the executing of this ſen tence of death upon her; ſince the ſacrificing of their children to thei Gods was a crime, for which the heathen nations were juſtly deteſte and puniſh'd by God; and *Jephthah*'s offering his daughter as a victi to the Lord might reflect a diſhonour upon the true God, as if he al delighted in ſuch ſacrifices; for theſe, and other reaſons, that might b alleg'd, we cannot but judge this action, notwithſtanding it was prob bly done out of a miſtaken principle of religion, to have been contra to the rules of religion, and unlawful.

SEVERAL things might be farther urg'd to aggravate the ſin of i but ſome things may alſo be offer'd to extenuate its guilt. No o ought to be put to death without a juſt cauſe, and without a juſt auth rity: where both of theſe are wanting, there the killing of a perſon upon all accounts unjuſtifiable: but when a perſon, who has power o life and death over another, doth without ſufficient reaſon take aw the life of that other, he is not chargeable with ſo complicated a gui as one who doth not only abuſe a power, which doth of right belong t him, but doth at the ſame time both wrongfully uſurp, and wrongfully exerciſe, a power which doth not at all belong to him. Now this ſove reign power of life and death *Jephthah* ſeems to have been inveſted with, both as a prince and as a father; for the power of fathers over thei children ſeems to have extended much farther in the earlier ages *of th* world, than it hath been allow'd to do after the reſtraints which hav been ſince laid upon it by the laws of ſome, not all, civil governments There ſeem to be plain footſteps in Scripture of an abſolute power ex erciſ'd by parents over their children; and ſome founders of common wealths left the fathers of families in the poſſeſſion, and ſupported the in the exerciſe, of their natural rights. Thus we are inform'd by the beſt of the *Roman* hiſtorians, that by the ancient conſtitution of tha government the fathers had an uncontrollable power over the liberty, the property, and the lives of their children; that they at pleaſure im priſon'd, chaſtis'd, and put to death their ſons, whatever age they we of, whatever offices in the ſtate they had gone thro', and whatever no ble exploits they had perform'd; that the greateſt ſtateſmen have ſu fer'd by the ſentence of their fathers tho' private perſons; and that no publick magiſtrate ever pretended to interpoſe for the reſcue of ſuch ſons out of their fathers hands.

HENCE it hath been obſerv'd in the caſe of *Abraham*'s offering hi ſon *Iſaac*, that the ſcandal of ſuch a fact could be no great objectio in thoſe times, when the abſolute power of parents over their childre was in its full force. And tho' this paternal power among the *Jew* was, before *Jephthah*'s time, reſtrain'd by the law of *Moſes*; yet eve by that law it is thought, that a power was in ſome caſes reſerv'd t parents of devoting their children to death. For thus we read *Lev.* 2 v. 28, 29. *No devoted thing that a man ſhall devote unto the Lord of a that he hath, both of man and beaſt, and of the field of his poſſeſſion, ſh be ſold or redeem'd: every devoted thing is moſt holy unto the Lord. No devoted, which ſhall be devoted of men,* that is, not by men, but out o men, *ſhall be redeem'd: but ſhall ſurely be put to death.* It is pla from this text, that ſome both things and perſons might be devoted; to wit, ſuch things and ſuch perſons, over which the perſon who de voted them had a power; that no ſuch, either devoted things or per

ſons,

s, could be ſold, or redeem'd; that all the perſons ſo devoted were
be put to death; and ſince the perſons, which might be thus devoted,
reckon'd among the poſſeſſions of thoſe who might thus devote them,
therefore cannot ſo properly be underſtood of the *Canaanites*, and
nalekites, who were not in their power, as of perſons actually under
ir power; ſince no perſons are ſo much under the power of others,
laves in the power of their lords, and children of their parents, it is
n hence with great probability of reaſon concluded by ſome, that
nts had, in ſome circumſtances, a power of devoting their children to
ruction; that *Jephthah* did by his vow thus devote his daughter,
that having thus devoted her, he might think himſelf oblig'd by
law to fulfil his vow, by putting her to death.

UT whether *Jephthah* had ſuch a power over his daughter, either
father, or as a ſovereign prince, or as having by his vow made her
anathema, and devoted her to deſtruction, or had not; yet there is
ther circumſtance which ſeems of great weight, tho' not for the
l acquittal of him from all blame, yet for the alleviation of his
t, and that was the free and voluntary conſent of his daughter to
execution of his vow. For when *Jephthah* expreſs'd his concern
having made a vow, which he could neither perform without cruel-
nor thought he could violate without impiety, ſhe, in order to re-
e his ſcruples, makes it her earneſt requeſt, that he would not, out of
neſs towards her, wound his own conſcience. *And ſhe ſaid unto him,* Judges 11. 36.
father, if thou haſt open'd thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me ac-
ing to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; foraſmuch as
Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the
ldren of Ammon. Now, if that maxim of the moraliſts is true, that
wrong can be done to perſons who are willing to ſuffer the ſuppos'd
ng, the ſlaying of *Jephthah's* daughter being not an act of mere
e, or arbitrary power, inflicted on her againſt her will, but done
h her conſent and at her entreaty, ſo as to become her own free
ice, will for that reaſon be attended with leſs injuſtice and barbarity.
offering up of *Iſaac* by his father *Abraham*, and the great acceptance
ch that ſacrifice found with God, might alſo leſſen the horror of
fact in the opinion of *Jephthah*: for tho' *Abraham* had the poſitive
nmand of God for what he did, which *Jephthah* could not pretend
ſo that there was a great diſparity between their two caſes; yet it
plain from the acceptableneſs of *Abraham's* offering, and the great
ard beſtow'd on him for his intended oblation, that the ſacrificing
beloved child was not, in all caſes and under all circumſtances, ſin
but might be ſo circumſtantiated, as to be an act of piety and ap-
v'd in the ſight of God; and when this example prov'd ſuch an action
e, as to the ſubſtance and matter of it, in ſome circumſtances, not
lawful, but commendable, *Jephthah* might from hence be led into
opinion, that the difference between his caſe and that of *Abraham*
not ſo great, as that what was laudable and almoſt meritorious in
one, ſhould be imputed as an unpardonable crime to the other.

UT how great ſoever *Jephthah's* ſin was, we cannot, I think, rea-
ably doubt, but it was a ſin of ignorance; for by his bitter complaint
ich he utter'd upon the firſt ſight of his daughter coming out to meet
n, it is evident that he was under great trouble and perplexity: ſhe
done nothing to alienate his affections from her, nay, ſhe had by
s very meeting him done an act, which muſt needs ſtrongly engage
affections towards her: the bowels of a father muſt neceſſarily yearn

to ſave the life of a loving and a beloved child: her generous offer un him, that he would do unto her according to his vow, tho' it migh render the doing of it leſs unjuſt, muſt make him, if he had any ſpar of pity and generoſity in his breaſt, do it with ſtill greater reluctanc nature muſt without doubt plead ſtrongly in her behalf, and this pl was not ſilenc'd by any reſentments of anger or revenge againſt her: n one who is a parent, no one who hath felt the workings of nature t wards his own iſſue, no one who hath ſuffer'd, or who hath fear'd, t loſs of an only child, but muſt be ſenſible what pangs of ſorrow, wh meltings of compaſſion, what agonies of grief muſt pierce the ſoul *Jephthah*, when he imagin'd himſelf under the ſad neceſſity of ſac ficing his own, his only, his virgin-daughter, whom he could not o up for a burnt-offering without ſacrificing at the ſame time all the pr penſions of nature, all the eaſe and pleaſure of his life, and all the pr ſpect of keeping up his family. Nothing leſs than a miſtaken opini of the indiſpenſable obligation of his vow, could prevail with him th to over-rule the ſtrong motives of intereſt and inclination; and a mi take which took its riſe from ſo good a principle, muſt, without qu ſtion, at leaſt extenuate his guilt in the judgment both of good natu men, and of an all-merciful God.

HAVING thus ſtated the fact, and determin'd the quality of it, I no proceed to draw therefrom thoſe practical inferences, which I propoſ in the third and laſt place.

THE moſt obvious and natural inference from this remarkable hiſto ry is, that we ſhould be ſtrictly careful, how we engage our ſelves i raſh and indeliberate vows. A vow is an act of Religion, and ough not therefore to be made haſtily and unadviſedly, but with great ſo neſs of mind, with mature thoughts, and with the moſt ſerious delibe ration. When men are ſtruck with an apprehenſion of ſome great dan ger, which they would gladly avoid; when their wiſhes are eagerly ben upon the obtaining ſome imagin'd good, which they would fain com paſs; they are then apt to be very liberal in the promiſes, which the make to God, upon condition, that they may eſcape the evil they ſu fer or fear, or that they may obtain the good they ſo fondly deſire. B no ſooner is that evil remov'd, or that mercy procur'd, but that the p miſes, which they made with ſo much haſte, are as quickly forgot: t difficulties of fulfilling their vows, which were never thought of, o which appear'd much leſs than they truly are, when theſe vows we made, come to be ſeriouſly thought of, and begin to appear much grea than they really are, when the ſame vows are to be perform'd. *Whe* *Jephthah* march'd out againſt the enemy, and made a publick and ſo lemn vow for the common-weal of his country, and for the gaining o a glorious conqueſt over his enemies, this victory ſeem'd of that val and moment to him, that he thought he could not purchaſe it at t dear a price: when he conceiv'd this vow, he ſeems thus as it we to have beſpoken the Almighty: "O Lord, by thy command I no
" go forth againſt the enemies of thy people: do thou, who art the Lo
" of hoſts, go along with me, and give me victory over thine and o
" enemies; if thou ſhalt grant unto me this my humble and earneſt r
" queſt, there is nothing ſo dear to me, the loſs of which I will n
" willingly undergo: to thee therefore I readily devote *whatſoever c*
" *eth forth of the doors of my houſe to meet me, when I return in pea*
" tho my only daughter her ſelf ſhould be the firſt perſon, who ſhou
" happen to meet me upon ſo joyful an occaſion, that daughter ſhou

e thine, and, in acknowledgment of ſo great a mercy, ſhould be *offer'd*
unto thee *for a burnt-offering*." Theſe probably were the ſentiments
Jephthah, when he firſt made this vow; but he had quite other no-
ns, when he came in cold blood to perform it. The ſight of his daugh-
reviv'd in him thoſe natural motions of love and tenderneſs, which
eager appetite after victory, whilſt it laſted, had for a time drown'd:
victory, when it was now gain'd, had loſt thoſe charms, which made
em ſo amiable at a diſtance; and on the other ſide, the loſs of his
hter's life, when he comes to take a nearer view of it, and to con-
it with all thoſe melancholy circumſtances that attended it, and
e diſmal conſequences that would follow it, begins to appear with
e other colours, than whilſt he took an haſty and ſuperficial view of
fore its approach.

ow, if we would avoid the like perplexities, we muſt take great
, how we enter into the like engagements: we muſt, before we
e any ſolemn reſolutions, calmly and impartially examine what we
rtake, what difficulties we may expect to meet with, what ſtrength
ave of our own, what aſſiſtance we may reaſonably depend upon
God, for the keeping of ſuch good purpoſes. I am far from the
on of thoſe men, who condemn all vows concerning things not
edently neceſſary, as unwarrantable: we have plain examples in
ture to juſtifie the uſe of ſpecial vows, by which men bind them-
to ſomewhat they were not before oblig'd to; and we have pre-
given us enjoyning the religious obſervance, and by conſequence
ſing the lawfulneſs, of ſuch vows. But as in civil life, men of the
aracter for integrity, and ſuch as are moſt punctual in keeping
words, are obſerv'd to be very ſparing in making of promiſes; ſo
gion, the beſt way we can take to obſerve the precept given us by
n; that *when we vow a vow unto God, we ſhould not defer to pay it*; Eccl. 5. 4.
e in the firſt place to obſerve another precept, which he lays down
e this, that *we ſhould not be raſh with our mouths, nor let our* V. 2.
s be haſty to utter any thing before God.

SECOND inference we may make from this hiſtory of *Jephthah*
; that we ſhould be punctual in the performance of our vows.
w cruel and barbarous ſoever this action of *Jephthah* may ap-
when taken altogether; yet there was ſomething in it highly com-
able. What therefore in him was blameable, that we ought care-
to avoid; what in him is praiſe-worthy, that we ought to imitate.
ight be a groſs error in him to think a vow, whereby he had vow'd
eath of his own daughter, inviolable; but we muſt own it to have
very laudable in *Jephthah*, that being perſwaded of the obligation
vow, no temptation of pleaſure, of intereſt, of paſſion, could pre-
with him to break it. Great was the trouble which he muſt find
e performance of this vow; but no trouble ſeem'd ſo great, as not
ve place to this conſideration, that *he had open'd his mouth unto*
ord, and could not go back. How ſhould this make us bluſh, who
the moſt ſolemn, moſt holy, and moſt indiſpenſable vows upon the
eſt temptations? The leaſt ſhadow of honour, the ſhorteſt and
inſipid pleaſure, the ſlighteſt and moſt inconſiderable advantage,
es of force enough to prevail with us to break thro' thoſe engage-
s, which we enter'd into at our baptiſm, which we have often re-
ed at God's altar, and upon the performance of which all our hopes
lvation depend. *What ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul*, is a Matt. 16. 26.
ſtion which our Saviour asks, and implies by it, that there is no equi-

valent

valent to our immortal ſouls: but there are ſome ſinners, with whom the worth of their own ſouls is valued at ſo cheap a rate, that they think any temporal advantage well purchas'd at the expence of a good conſcience. *Jephthah* here would not break his vow, to ſave the life o an only child: but there are ſome perſons ſo far from being of *Jephthah's* mind, that they make no ſcruple to break all the laws of man and of Go in order, not to ſave the life of a child, not to procure a compete livelihood for it, this would be ſome temptation to an ill thing, b to purchaſe an higher title of honour, or a greater abundance of weal for thoſe children, whoſe pomp and riches are already perhaps gre enough to make them exquiſitely miſerable, both in this world and i the next.

A THIRD inference we may make from the preceding diſcourſe this, that thoſe, who are ready to condemn *Jephthah* for his cruel tre ment of his daughter, would not themſelves be guilty of equal or great cruelty towards their own children. I don't doubt but all who he me, and eſpecially all parents, look upon *Jephthah* as a very barbaro and brutal man, who could, upon pretence of an haſty vow, when h came to conſider of the matter more coolly, give way to the executi of his own daughter; and a man may perhaps bring his own good-na ture under ſuſpicion, by ſaying any thing in mitigation of ſo execrabl a parricide. And yet it is without queſtion, that there are ſome parent who are much more unnatural and cruel towards their own *children* than *Jephthah* was towards his daughter. Sure I am, that all thoſe, who breed up their children in ſinful and wicked courſes, who train them u in the paths of unrighteouſneſs, who take no care to inſtill into them pri ciples of virtue and religion, who by their own wicked examples co rupt their lives and manners, who any ways contribute to, or take no care to prevent, the deſtruction of their ſouls, are guilty of much grea barbarity towards their children, than it can be pretended *Jephthah* wa He, out of a wrong notion of the obligation of his vow, ſacrific'd hi daughter to God; they, contrary to all the ties of nature and of religio do, as far as in them lies, ſacrifice their children to the Devil: he depriv his daughter of ſome few years of a ſhort and troubleſome life; th do all in their power to defeat their children of the hopes of a ble and glorious eternity. He inflicts a temporal death upon his daugh who had given her free and voluntary conſent thereto; they expoſe th children to, what can never be an object of a rational choice, infin and everlaſting torments. He ſheds his daughter's blood out of an er neous opinion, that he might thereby reſcue his own ſoul from the gui of breaking a ſolemn vow; they, by contributing to the ruin *of* the childrens precious ſouls, do mightily encreaſe their own damnation. H brings a calamity upon his daughter, which deſerv'd to be bewail'd b her and her companions for two months; they derive upon their chi dren thoſe judgments, which will cauſe bitter *weeping, and wailing,* a *gnaſhing of teeth* to all eternity.

IT were eaſie to make ſeveral more inferences from what has be deliver'd, which might be of good uſe to us in the regulation of o practice: but thoſe which have been already made will be enough, we make a right uſe of them; and too many, if we reſt in ſpeculati and do not apply them to the conduct of our lives. That therefore w may make a proper uſe of what hath been ſaid, God of his infinite me cy grant thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

TH

HE ROYAL BENEFACTRESS;

OR,

The great Charity of educating poor Children:

IN A

SERMON

PREACH'D IN THE

Pariſh-Church of St. *SEPULCHRE*,

June 1. 1710,

BEING

Thurſday in Whitſun-Week,

the Anniverſary Meeting of the Children educated in
he Charity-Schools, in and about the Cities of LONDON
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ERMON XXIII.

The Royal Benefactreſs, *&c.*

Exodus II. 9, 10.

d Pharaoh's *Daughter ſaid unto her, Take this child away,*
nd nurſe it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And
he woman took the child, and nurſed it. And the child grew,
and ſhe brought him unto Pharaoh's *Daughter, and he became*
er Son.

THE inſpir'd books of *Moſes* are, as it were, one continued hiſtory of God's providential care of his choſen people. Many and wonderful are the inſtances therein recorded of the interpoſal of the Almighty, in reſcuing his ſervants from imminent dangers: but amongſt theſe none
more remarkable, none was attended with greater conſequences,
n the preſervation of *Moſes* from that death, to which he was ex-
'd in his infancy; and the deliverance of him, whom God had ap-
nted to be the deliverer of his people. Meaſures had been taken at
Court of *Pharaoh* for the utter extirpation of the Children of *Iſrael*:
in purſuance of theſe an edict had iſſued forth, that *every ſon that* Exod. 1. 22.
s born unto them ſhould be caſt into the river. Under theſe unhap-
circumſtances *Moſes* is born, by the cruelty of his Prince deſtin'd
immediate death; but by the decrees of God reſerv'd to be the glo-
us inſtrument, who was to execute his all-wiſe purpoſes. All the
e, that could be taken by a tender mother of a lovely child, was
en by the mother of *Moſes* for his preſervation: *when ſhe ſaw him,* chap. 2. 2.
t he was a goodly child, ſhe hid him three months. But it ſeems
enemy was as vigilant for his ruin, as his parents could be for his
ety; and therefore the concealment of him was now no longer pra-
cable.

IF he ſhould be found in his mother's cuſtody, he muſt inevitably
periſh; if he were expos'd abroad, he could but periſh; and by ſome
unuſual accident, rather to be wiſh'd than to be hop'd for, he might
poſſibly eſcape: to God's providence therefore ſhe commits him, and
v. 3. *putting the child into an ark, lays it in the flags by the river's brink.*
Nor was her ſignal truſt in God defeated: her hopes were more tha
anſwer'd; and all things ſucceeded better, than ſhe in her fondeſt wiſh
could deſire. By an happy train of events, *Pharaoh*'s Daughter come
at that very time to that very place; ſhe ſpies the ark, ſends one
her retinue to fetch it, opens it, ſees the child weeping, hath compa
ſion on him, diſcovers it to be one of the *Hebrew* children, ſends f
a nurſe of the *Hebrew* women to nurſe it, who happens to be its ow
mother, and to whom, as to a nurſe, ſhe delivers it to be brought u
at her expence. From this entertaining piece of ſacred hiſtory, the
do naturally ariſe ſeveral obſervations, worthy of our notice, and pe
tinent to the preſent occaſion.

AND *Firſt* We may obſerve, how particular a care the divine Pro
vidence takes of little children.

WE find here a child born of parents under a ſtate of bondage and
perſecution; born to be a ſlave, if perchance he ſhould live; but doom'd
to expire from the very firſt moment he ſhould breath; ſentenc'd to
deſtruction by that ſovereign power, from which by his native right he
might expect protection; deſtitute of all help from parents, *relations,*
or friends; and abandon'd to numberleſs accidents, any one of which
might have prov'd fatal. In this deſperate ſtate, by the over-rulin
hand of God things are ſo order'd in his behalf, that no child born i
the happieſt circumſtances could be better provided for: that in the
nurſing of him no tender care might be wanting, he is ſuckled by hi
own mother; and that the child might not any ways ſuffer by the p
verty of its parents, a liberal maintenance is afforded by the bounty o
his charitable Benefactreſs. Thus did that infant, who, according t
all human appearance, was forlorn and helpleſs, thro' God's aſſiſtanc
enjoy all thoſe advantages, which ſcarcely ever fall to the lot of chi
dren born either of mean, or of noble parentage. So peculiar a p
vidence as this, is not perhaps to be exemplified in many other inſtanc:
but reaſon, Scripture, and experience do all aſſure us, that the like pro
Pſal. 145. 9. vidential care doth extend it ſelf to other children; *The mercy of G*
is over all his works: from him they have their Being, and by him th
Pſal. 104.30. ſubſiſt: *He ſendeth forth his Spirit, and they are created*; he wit
v. 29. draws his influence, and *they die, and return to their duſt.* And
all things are upheld only by his power, ſo it is rational to conclude, th
he proportions his aſſiſtance to the wants of his creatures; and, like
tender parent, ſhews the greateſt care towards thoſe of his offſpri
who are moſt weakly, and moſt ſtand in need of his help. Now lit
children, by reaſon of their natural frailty, are liable to innumera
caſualties, from which grown age is uſually exempted; they can neith
foreſee evils, when approaching; nor repel them, when at hand;
ſupport themſelves under their preſſure: theſe natural defects are the
2 Cor. 12.9. fore ſupplied by the God of nature, and *his ſtrength is made perf*
in their *weakneſs*. And as the imbecillity of their conſtitution do
render them proper objects of that divine aid, which is ſo neceſſary
them for their ſupport; ſo their ſpotleſs innocence doth powerfully b
ſpeak the ſingular love and favour of God. Whatever title adult p
ſo

s might pretend to God's loving-kindneſs, as they are his creatures,
y may ſeem with juſtice to have forfeited, as they are ſinners: but
ng children, as they have no merits to give them any rightful claim
the divine favour, ſo neither have they any ſuch flagrant demerits,
may ſhut them out from the benefit of his protection.

This benefit therefore we are ſure from the Word of God they do
y; this watchful care over their infancy the Saints of God, when
e to riper years, have thankfully acknowledg'd; in the catalogues
nercies receiv'd thro' the courſe of their lives, thoſe, which either
r own memories have ſuggeſted to them, or their godly parents have
inded them of, as conferr'd on them from heaven during their
dhood, have always found a place; their obſervation of God's
of other children hath led them into a ſenſe, that the ſame care
been taken of themſelves, when by themſelves it could not be ob-
'd: on the experience they have had of the divine goodneſs, mani-
d to them whilſt in a ſtate of infancy, they have built their hopes
nding the like ſupport, when reduc'd to the like weak condition by
infirmities of old age. *Thou art my hope, O Lord God,* ſaith the Pſal. 71. 5.
miſt; *thou art my truſt from my youth: by thee have I been holden* v. 6.
rom the womb; thou waſt my hope when I yet hanged upon my mo- Pſal. 22. 9.
's breaſts: caſt me not off in the time of old age; forſake me not when Pſal. 71. 9.
trength faileth.

ut we have a ſtill ſtronger teſtimony of God's peculiar care of chil-
from his appointment of tutelar Angels to guard and protect them:
hat there is ſuch an appointment, is the general doctrine of the
ch, grounded on that precept of our bleſſed Saviour; *take heed,* Matt. 18. 10.
ye deſpiſe not one of theſe little ones; for I ſay unto you, that in
en their Angels do always behold the face of my Father, which is
eaven. That children are every moment wonderfully preſerv'd
many fatal accidents, by the inviſible power of God, either im-
iately interpoſing, or acting by the miniſtry of his holy Angels, pa-
have the moſt ſenſible and moſt affecting proof from their own
y experience. For they muſt have been careleſs obſervers of di-
providence, who have not taken notice of many ſuch wonderful
erances wrought within their own families, ſuch as are not to be
unted for by any natural cauſes; and they muſt be of very ſhallow
cities, who do not from thence infer, that many more deliverances
e like kind muſt have been wrought, which have eſcap'd their no-

he *Second* obſervation, which I ſhall make from the above-recited
ry, is this, that there is implanted by God in human nature a ſtrong
penſion to acts of charity and compaſſion.

he Royal Princeſs, whoſe charity is here recorded, was an utter
ger to God's reveal'd will: he had not yet *ſhew'd his Word unto Ja-*
nor deliver'd *his ſtatutes and his judgments unto Iſrael*: theſe were
e given by the hand of this very *Moſes*, when come to the ripeneſs
manhood; much leſs had God manifeſted himſelf to other nations,
her had the heathen knowledge of his laws. But there was no need
written law to inſtruct her in that duty of helping the diſtreſs'd,
ch was plainly taught her by the law of nature. Aſſoon as her eyes
e ſtruck with the doleful ſight, aſſoon as the cries of the infant ſound-
in her ears, her bowels yearn'd within her, and her heart was melt-
with compaſſion. Without reaſoning, without deliberating, puſh'd

on by the ſecret and powerful impulſe of nature, ſhe affords an immediate ſuccour; and her firſt thoughts of what it became her to do in ſo lamentable and preſſing a caſe were as juſt and rational, as if they had been the final reſult of the cooleſt and moſt mature deliberation.

The very firſt principle imprinted on the mind of ſociable creatures by the finger of God ſeems to be this, that they ſhould do no wrong to any; the next, that they ſhould do all the good poſſible to thoſe, wh want their aſſiſtance. This duty therefore of helping the helpleſs thoſ who had no other light to guide their actions by but that of reaſo found themſelves plainly inſtructed in by the reflections, which the made on their own inclinations, ſentiments, and diſpoſitions. This a duty, to which they own'd themſelves born; for which they acknow ledg'd they were made; and without which they could give no ration account, why their natures ſhould be ſo fram'd, as in fact they foun they were. For when they took notice of what paſt within their ow breaſts, they could not but obſerve, that when any object of compaſſi was preſented to them, they were, without debating about it, imme diately ſtruck with pity, and forcibly carried away with an impatien deſire of contributing to the removal of that miſery, which made the ſpectators, as well as the ſufferer of it, uneaſie: they found that ſympathy betwixt themſelves, and others of the ſame nature with themſelves, that they could not look upon another's calamity, without being themſelves touch'd, and as it were infected with it: and that therefore to deny relief to the diſtreſs'd, was to offer violence to their own natures, and to be in the ſevereſt manner cruel to their own fleſh and blood.

They obſerv'd farther, that when they reach'd out help to thoſ who wanted it, there immediately ſprang up in their minds an inexpreſſible joy and ſatisfaction; in the actual doing of good they felt ſenſible pleaſure and delight: and when afterwards they at leiſure took a review of their acts of charity, they could not but applaud themſelve for them, and think the pleaſure they found in that ſelf-approbation, ſufficient reward for what they had done; and yet, at the ſame tim as the wiſeſt of them judg'd, an earneſt of ſome unknown greater rew ſtill in reſerve. This eager propenſion of mind to aſſiſt the indige and to help the helpleſs, they look'd upon to be ſo ſuitable to the ture of man, that this one virtue carried away from all others the culiar name of humanity. They thought therefore they could not deaf to the importunities of the neceſſitous, and harden their hea againſt the ſupplications of the diſtreſs'd, without forfeiting the title men, and degenerating into the rank of barbarous and cruel ſavag Upon theſe natural principles did thoſe, who conſulted their unaſſiſt reaſon, prove the neceſſity of being compaſſionate and charitable; ſu ably to theſe the beſt of them acted, and ſtand to this day recorded the hiſtories of their ſeveral ages and countries, for eminent acts of neficence and goodneſs; to their own immortal honour, and to the and indelible reproach of thoſe, who are leſs careful to diſcharge th duty under the ſenſe of much nobler principles, and much ſtronger ligations.

I don't know whether under this head it may not be proper to o ſerve farther, that this ſtrong propenſion towards acts of pity and co paſſion, which is implanted in human nature, is, generally ſpeakin moſt ſtrong and moſt operative in women. That noble Princeſs, wh generous pity towards a poor helpleſs infant is here regiſtred by h

gratef

teful Beneficiary, muſt be endued with a more than ordinary degree
enderneſs; becauſe it is hard to aſſign any other principle, which
ld excite her to act as ſhe did, and eaſie to alledge ſeveral motives,
ch, had they not been over-rul'd by this, might probably have re-
in'd her from ſo acting. She was bred up amidſt the luxuries of a
rt; and it is not uſual for perſons, who abound in all manner of
ty, who are inur'd to eaſe and delicacy, and ſeldom meet with any
g that may diſquiet or moleſt them, to be affected with a deep ſenſe
e calamities of others. Thoſe, who have themſelves felt the ſmart
iſeries, are apt to have a fellow-feeling of the ſufferings of the mi-
le; and thoſe, who have hitherto been proſperous, but have rea-
o fear that they may ſhortly be overtaken by adverſity, may be
d by ſelf-intereſt to afford that relief, which they themſelves ſhould
lad to find in the day of their diſtreſs. But thoſe, who have en-
a conſtant flow of uninterrupted pleaſure, have no inward ſenſe of
bitterneſs of pain to quicken their compaſſion; and thoſe, who, by
affluence of all the good things of life, ſeem to be plac'd without
reach of adverſity, may be leſs ſollicitous to lend that aid, which
themſelves have no probable occaſion of ever borrowing. It is
obſervation of the Prophet concerning thoſe, *who lie upon beds of* Amos 6. 4.
y, and ſtretch themſelves upon their couches; *who eat the lambs*
f the flock, and the calves out of the midſt of the ſtall; *who chant* v. 5.
e ſound of the viol, and invent to themſelves inſtruments of muſick;
drink wine in bowls, and anoint themſelves with the chief oint- v. 6.
s; that *they are not grieved for the affliction of* Joſeph. And if
an affectionate concern for the affliction of *Joſeph* is not to be
for, even in thoſe of his own kindred, whilſt in the height of their
y, much leſs was it to be expected in one, who by birth, and by
prejudices of education, was diſpos'd to be an enemy. The *Iſrae-*
were ſcorn'd and hated by the *Egyptians*; their utter extinction
reſolv'd upon; every male-child was by *Pharaoh*'s decree proſcrib'd:
ſhe might ſeem to be no good *Egyptian*, no loyal ſubject, no duti-
laughter, who ſhould ſpare, who ſhould favour, who ſhould che-
one, that ſtood condemn'd by the common vote of her country,
prince, and her father. But the tenderneſs of her ſex pleaded more
gly for her ſhewing pity, than all theſe conſiderations could do
nſt it; they might have harden'd the heart of a ſon of *Pharaoh*, but
were not of force enough to prevail upon his daughter.

OR very wiſe and good purpoſes hath God been pleas'd to form this
neſs of temper, this ſweetneſs of diſpoſition, this powerful bent to-
ds acts of pity and compaſſion, in the very frame and conſtitution
vomen: the bringing up of children from the firſt years of their in-
y is their allotted province; in the diſcharge of this many hardſhips
to be undergone, many diſquietudes are to be born, which, tho'
erwiſe troubleſome and vexatious enough, yet the tenderneſs of their
ctions makes them paſs thorough, not only with patience and con-
ment, but even with cheerfulneſs and delight. It is this tenderneſs,
ch makes that ſex ſo quick to diſcern, and ſo prompt to relieve, the
ts of children: to this tenderneſs, under God's bleſſing, we all of
owe it, that we died not from the womb, that we have eſcap'd ma-
old hazards in our child-hood, and that when in our grown years
have at any time been confin'd to the bed of ſickneſs, we have ſtill
nd comfort in it, and have roſe again from it. It is not to be de-

nied, that here and there an inſtance may be given of want of pity, or perhaps even of extraordinary degrees of barbarity, in women; but at the ſame time it muſt be own'd, that ſuch women are look'd upon as monſters in nature; that they are ſuppos'd to have long ſtruggled with, and at laſt to have overcome, the innate ſoftneſs of their ſex; and that for the moſt part it is obſervable, that as ſtrength of mind and of bo-dy, prudence in council, and courage in war, are the diſtinguiſhing cha-racters of men; ſo gentleneſs, kindneſs, bowels of mercies, tendern of heart, acts of love and charity, of pity and compaſſion, are the p culiar graces and ornaments of women.

Our *Third* obſervation from the hiſtory premis'd ſhall be this; th generous ſouls, the more kindneſs they have ſhewn to the indigent, th more ſtrongly they are inclin'd to be ſtill farther kind to the ſame pe ſons.

It was a great degree of kindneſs in *Pharaoh*'s Daughter to ſpa an *Hebrew* child; it was a ſtill greater to take care of it, and to def the charge of its maintenance: but her bounty ſtopp'd not here; th child, when grown up, is brought home to her, *and becomes her ſ* Mean and narrow minds are apt to be very ſparing and frugal of the favours; when they have beſtow'd one kindneſs, they wait for ſome re turn, before they go on to confer another; it is their buſineſs to traf fick for good turns, and therefore, like wiſe merchants, they are un willing to venture too much upon one bottom: where they ſow, ther they expect to reap, and think a ſecond ſeed-time comes too *quick*, i it returns before the harveſt. But perſons, who are truly and ſincere ly charitable, who act upon noble and diſintereſted principles, do goo for the ſake of doing good; it is the ſingle deſign of their charity, th it may be uſeful to others, and whilſt it is ſo uſeful, they have the aim: the epicure himſelf doth not find half that pleaſure in his ſenſual ty, as theſe do in acts of bounty and beneficence: if a return be mad by the perſons oblig'd, they are glad to find that their favours are be ſtow'd on the deſerving and thankful; and if they meet with no re compence for their benefactions here upon earth, their proſpect is e larg'd, and they look forwards to thoſe more glorious rewards, whi are reſerv'd for the charitable at the great day of retribution. Th are not therefore likely to be *weary in well-doing*; becauſe whatever be the diſpoſitions of thoſe to whom they are bountiful, be the ſoil i which they ſow their ſeed never ſo barren and unkindly, yet th know, that *in due ſeaſon they ſhall reap, if they faint not*. Gal. 6. 9.

Charity, as it beareth the neareſt reſemblance to the image God, ſo, like him, it delighteth to perfect all its works; nor *is a* ski ful artiſt more uneaſie in leaving his work unfiniſh'd, or a tender p rent in ſeeing his child defective in any of its limbs, than a charitab perſon is in deſiſting from a good work, well-deſign'd, happily beg and, ſo far as it is gone, anſwerable to his wiſhes, before he has p to it his laſt hand, and rendred it entire and compleat. The Goſp hath given us a charming picture of a perſon throughly charitable the parable of the good *Samaritan*; his offices of kindneſs cloſely f low'd one another in a continued train, and there was no ſtint of h bounty, till there was no farther occaſion for it: *He ſaw, as he jo neyed, a poor traveller, ſtript of his raiment, wounded, and half dea he had compaſſion on him, went to him, bound up his wounds, po in oyl and wine, ſet him on his own beaſt, brought him to an Inn,* to Luke 10. 33, &c.

ca

e of him whilſt he ſtaid, and when he departed, gave to the hoſt
h money in hand, and an unlimited commiſſion for defraying any
ther expence: *Take care of him; and whatſoever thou ſpendeſt*
re, when I come again, I will repay thee.

ANOTHER obſervation, which we may gather from the hiſtory be-
e us, is this; that thoſe are rather to be eſteem'd the parents of chil-
n, who give them good education, than thoſe to whom they owe
ir birth.

MOSES was by birth an *Hebrew*, deſcended of a ſon and of a daugh-
of *Levi*; but becauſe he was educated by the care, and at the ex-
ce, of *Pharaoh*'s Daughter, according to his own account, *he be-*
e her ſon. The mother indeed of *Moſes* was not leſs his mother,
' ſhe expos'd him, becauſe ſhe was compell'd to it by neceſſity: but
ſhe done this out of a wicked principle, ſhe would by ſuch an act
unnatural cruelty have forfeited that title of a mother, which be-
g'd to her, as having conceiv'd, and brought him forth. Great is
debt, which children owe to their parents, who are under God the
towers of life upon them, and the authors of their beings: but life
elf is no other-ways valuable, than as it puts us into a capacity of
ppineſs. If therefore an early proviſion be made, that in the courſe
it, it may prove happy, it is then a bleſſing, which we cannot be
thankful for; becauſe it is the foundation of all other bleſſings: but
r want of a good and virtuous education, men are left deſtitute of
neceſſary means of rendring themſelves happy; if, by the fault of
ir parents, miſery be entail'd upon them; then that life, which car-
with it this encumbrance, is a curſe inſtead of a bleſſing; and the
ferring it is to be look'd upon rather as an injury hardly to be for-
ven, than as a benefit which deſerves our acknowledgment. What
tions men have of the valuableneſs of life, merely on account of its
n intrinſick worth; how far they are from eſteeming either the gift,
continuance of it, a benefit, when it is attended with miſery, is evi-
t from the bitter complaints of *Job*, in the extremity of his agony;
en *he curſt his day, and ſaid: Let the day periſh, wherein I was* Job. 3. 3.
n; and the night, in which it was ſaid, there is a man-child con-
'd. Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the v. 11.
ſt, when I came out of the belly? Wherefore is light given unto him v. 20.
t is in miſery, and life unto the bitter in ſoul? Doth one, who in-
ghs in this manner againſt life, look upon it as a thing always good
d deſirable? Would he thank thoſe, who, foreſeeing it would prove
us wretched, had forc'd it upon him? But above all, would he eſteem
em his friends and benefactors, who contriv'd to render his condi-
n thus woful and deplorable? Such friends, ſuch benefactors are thoſe
rents, who having brought children into a world full of miſery and
ckedneſs, take no farther concern for them, but leave them void of
uſeful knowledge; deſtitute and naked, neglected and forſaken; un-
m'd againſt temptations, an eaſie prey to that ravenous lion, who is
ways *going about, ſeeking whom he may devour.* Forlorn and hope-
s is the ſtate of ſuch children, unleſs reſcued from deſtruction by ſome
aritable hand: unworthy therefore are thoſe of the name of parents,
nwarrantable are their pretenſions to the love and honour due to pa-
nts, in whom the parental affection is quite extinguiſh'd: to them doth
is name more properly belong, upon them are the rights and privi-
ges of parentage deſervedly transferr'd, who are mov'd with the af-

fections of parents, and by whom the offices of parents are readily an constantly perform'd.

THERE are other proper reflections, which do naturally ariſe fro this instructive hiſtory. We might from hence obſerve, that acts o compaſſion and charity add a new luſtre to perſons eminent for thei rank and dignity: that almighty God, tho' he could ſupply the wan of the miſerable by his own immediate hand, yet chooſes to reach fort his gifts unto men by the miniſtry of men: that charity ought not to b limited to thoſe of our own country, or of our own perſwaſion; bu to be extended even to ſuch as are of a different nation, or different r ligion from us: that perſons of mean birth, and ſuch as are bred up b the charity of others, do ſometimes arrive at the higheſt degrees of ho nour, and do become eminently ſerviceable both to their own genera tion, and to poſterity. Theſe obſervations might be eaſily deduc'd fro this ſtory, and to advantage be enlarg'd upon, were it not time to ap ply what hath been deliver'd, to that happy occaſion, for which we a now met together in this ſolemn and great aſſembly.

IT hath been obſerv'd in the *Firſt* place, how particular a care God's providence takes of little children.

OF this we have one remarkable inſtance in the child *Moſes*, and of this we have as many preſent and living inſtances, as there do now ſtand poor children before us. When we caſt our eyes upon this pleaſing ſpectacle, a ſpectacle delightful in the ſight of men, of angels, and of God; when we reflect on the apparent hazards of body and ſoul, to which each of theſe little ones was by the circumſtances of its birth left expos'd; when we conſider the happy condition, in which by the providence of God, and the charity of God-like perſons, they are now plac'd; when we carry our thoughts forward to the manifold bleſſings, which we plainly foreſee will hence redound to themſelves, to their families, to theſe populous cities, to the whole kingdom, to the eſtabliſh'd Church, yea, and if we are not miſtaken in our juſt hopes, to diſtant countries, and to ſucceeding generations; we cannot but look upon them, as ſo many little *Moſes*'s, drawn, as it were, out of the water, reſcu'd from the very brink of deſtruction, exemplifying in our days to the very ſenſes o unbelievers, what the faithful are perſwaded of from the holy Scriptur concerning God's providential care of little children.

NOW the natural inference, which all ſhould make from hence, and which many, who hear me, have both already made, and long ſince put into practice, is this; that it is their duty to concur with the gracious deſigns of God, and to look upon thoſe as worthy of their moſt tender care, who are the darlings of providence, and the Almighty's moſt peculiar favourites. God's treaſures are not ſo ſcanty, God's power is not ſo limited, but that he is able to ſubſiſt all his creatures, without leaving ſome to depend upon the benevolence of others: he could have ſo order'd the courſe of nature, that children ſhould not have wanted ſupport from thoſe, who are grown up; and he could diſpenſe his bleſſings with ſo equal an hand, that there ſhould be no poor to be maintain'd at the expence of the rich. He, who at the prayer of *Moſes, rained down Manna* upon the *Iſraelites, for to eat*, and *gave them food from Heaven*, could have fed the infant *Moſes* with angels food, and have ſupported him with his own immediate hand: but he choſe rather to convey his bleſſings thro' another channel, and to make *Pharaoh*'s daughter do unto him the office of a mother, that there might be room for the

exerciſe

rciſe of charity; and that he might ſhew his goodneſs, as well towards
who had the welcome opportunity of affording, as towards him
o wanted, and who receiv'd, relief.

Wʜᴀᴛ honour can accrue unto mortal men greater than this, of be-
the inſtruments of God in diſpenſing his gifts to their fellow-crea-
s? How deſirous muſt good men be of the opportunity, how gree-
f the pleaſure, how ambitious of the glory, of working together with
in that labour of love, in which his infinite goodneſs doth moſt de-
t? When we reach out unto helpleſs children any bleſſing, either
poral or ſpiritual, either conducive to their happineſs in this world
n the next, we are the immediate conveyors, but God is the origi-
beſtower, of every ſuch gift; and what God ſaid of *Moſes* in rela-
to his brother *Aaron*, is true of every charitable benefactor in re-
nce to the perſon reliev'd by him, *He is unto him inſtead of God.* Exod. 4. 16.
bleſſed Saviour ſaid of himſelf, whilſt he was here upon earth,
t things ſoever the Father doeth, theſe alſo doeth the Son likewiſe; John 5. 19.
as he copied after the pattern ſet by his Father in all other reſpects,
id he more eſpecially in his affectionate tenderneſs towards little
dren. His exceeding love, his unparallel'd humility, his mighty
deſcenſion, as they appear'd viſibly in all the circumſtances of his
h, of his life, and of his death; ſo were they more eminently con-
uous in that paſſionate concern, which he in his diſcourſes ſo warm-
xpreſs'd, and in his actions ſo apparently ſhew'd, towards young
dren. Since therefore it hath appear'd from the hiſtory of God's pro-
nce towards the child *Moſes*, that the care of our heavenly Father
doth in a more peculiar manner extend it ſelf towards little children;
it is evident from the Goſpel, that our Saviour's tender concern
them was by his words, by his geſtures, by his deeds, plainly mani-
d; thoſe who deſire to approve themſelves the children of God,
t their heavenly Father doeth in regard to theſe little ones, the ſame
they do likewiſe; thoſe, who would ſhew themſelves the true di-
les of Chriſt, will take care that the ſame diſpoſitions of mind, the
e love and compaſſion, the ſame goodneſs and condeſcenſion, towards
e children be conſpicuous in them, which *were alſo in Chriſt Je-*

Oᴜʀ *Second* obſervation was, that God hath implanted in human
ure a ſtrong propenſion to acts of pity and compaſſion.

Wʜᴇɴ we who are the miniſters of the Goſpel do, in diſcharge
our high truſt, exhort Chriſtians to the ſevere doctrines of humilia-
n, and repentance; of mortification, and ſelf-denial; of bearing grie-
s injuries with patience, and ſtifling all thoughts of revenge; we
ak unto our hearers with ſome diſadvantage; becauſe tho' reaſon and
igion are on our ſide, yet paſſion and inclination are againſt us: but
en we call upon them to be charitable to the poor, to relieve the diſ-
ſs'd, to help the helpleſs, we do not find it ſo extremely difficult to
vail; becauſe men's natural affections plead the ſame cauſe as we do,
enforce it with more powerful rhetorick, than we can pretend to:
have nothing farther in ſuch caſes to ask of our auditors, than that
y would follow the bent of their own inclinations; that they would
t ſtruggle againſt the force of nature; that they would not deny
emſelves that ſenſible pleaſure, which ariſes from doing good; that
ey would not quench the motions of pity and tenderneſs, which they
l in their own breaſts, and which they are not able to ſubdue with-

out offering violence to themſelves, and being cruel to their own fle
which craves acts of mercy from them with greater earneſtneſs and i
portunity, than do thoſe very ſupplicants, who call for relief. We
thoſe, to whom we addreſs our ſelves on theſe preſſing occaſions, u
terly unacquainted with divine Revelation; had they never heard
the name of Chriſt; had they never learn'd, what excellent precepts h
hath given, what a winning example he hath ſet, what powerful m
tives he hath propos'd, to enforce the duty of charity; yet there i
a law written in the tables of their own hearts, which is ſufficient
inſtruct them in this duty, in which they cannot be wanting, wh
they remember that they are men, altho' they ſhould forget that th
are alſo Chriſtians. But tho' nature be of it ſelf a ſtrong ſpur to a
of beneficence, yet will it exert it ſelf more vigorouſly, when animat
by a principle of Religion, by an ardent love of God, and by the c
tain hopes of a future recompence. Thoſe temporal wants of our b
thren, which ſtrongly affect our ſenſes, will move pity in the breaſt
a good-natur'd man, tho' unregenerate and void of grace; but fi
alone can inſpire us with a juſt ſenſe of their ſpiritual wants, and
earneſt deſire to relieve them.

WHEN we contemplate the infinite love of Chriſt towards the ſouls
of men; when we ſeriouſly conſider, that the ſalvation of ſouls wa
the occaſion of his birth, the buſineſs of his life, and the end of his death
Philip. 2. 7, 8. that for this end he emptied himſelf of the glories of his God-head, *too*
upon him the form of a ſervant, and became obedient unto death, eve
the death of the croſs; that to procure this he left the joys of heaven
and deſcended to the nethermoſt parts of hell; that to make way f
this he ſent his meſſengers before him, and to promote this he left hi
Apoſtles behind him; that the miſſion of the holy Ghoſt was in pro
ſecution of this deſign, and that this is the object of his continual in
terceſſion at God's right hand; that the mercies, which God beſtow'd
on his ancient people the *Jews*, were only faint types of this greater
deliverance to prefigure it to the ages paſt; and that the ſacraments
which he hath inſtituted, are memorials of this mercy to all genera
tions to come; that all the return which our Saviour expects from u
John 15. 12. for theſe wonderful inſtances of his love towards us, is, that *we d*
love one another; that charity is the diſtinguiſhing character of Chriſt's
diſciples; that it was his laſt dying command; that it is the rule b
which he will try us at the laſt day; that a more exceeding weight o
glory is reſerv'd for thoſe, who are the inſtruments of bringing other
Dan. 12. 3. to heaven, and that they *that turn many to righteouſneſs, ſhall ſhin*
as the ſtars for ever and ever; theſe conſiderations, often ponder'd i
our thoughts, duly attended unto, and ſuffer'd to ſink deeply in ou
hearts, will inflame us with an intenſe love to the ſouls of men, wi
make us ſollicitous to find out methods for promoting their eternal hap
pineſs, will certainly determine us with all gladneſs to embrace tho
proper opportunities, which theſe charity-ſchools afford to every wel
diſpos'd Chriſtian, of being under Chriſt a deliverer of his brother's ſou
If any therefore, who are call'd by the name of Chriſtians, do ſteel the
hearts againſt all the dictates of humanity, and obligations of the Go
ſpel; if they wilfully reſiſt the motions, both of nature and of grace,
if they obſtinately refuſe, out of their ſuperfluities, to ſupply the craving
wants of their brethren; if they can ſee a poor abandon'd child ready
to ſtarve for want of the neceſſaries of life, or in danger of periſhing

evererlaſtingly for the lack of ſaving knowledge, and not reach forth helping hand to reſcue ſuch an one, the Daughter of *Pharaoh ſhall up in judgment* againſt ſuch inhuman Chriſtians; for ſhe took com- ſion on the child *Moſes*, and behold a greater than *Moſes* is here: according to our Saviour's conſtruction, what *is done, or not done,* Matth. 25. 40, 45. *o the leaſt of theſe his brethren, is either done, or not done unto* n.

UNDER this ſecond head, I took notice, that this natural propenſion ards acts of pity and charity is uſually ſtrongeſt in women; of which text gives us a remarkable inſtance in the generous act of *Pharaoh*'s ghter. But we need not look backwards into ancient hiſtory, or go of our own kingdom, for an example of a ROYAL BENE- CTRESS, eminent for her tender compaſſion and liberal bounty ards poor, deſtitute, and helpleſs children. Amongſt the many and al proofs, which our moſt gracious Sovereign hath given of her real ſincere kindneſs for this Church, and of her tender concern for its fare and proſperity, we have reaſon to look upon this as none of the , that all charitable and pious deſigns, which have been form'd for ancing its honour and intereſt, both at home and abroad, have always by her countenanc'd and encourag'd. * One of theſe Nurſeries of gious education, erected lately near her palace, and growing up un- her more immediate influence, is conſtantly refreſh'd by plentiful ms in a liberal manner flowing from her Royal bounty: † another hem ſhe hath been graciouſly pleas'd to **Incorporate, in order to make re ſolid foundation for its ſupport and maintenance:** What *Pharaoh*'s ghter ſaid unto the *Hebrew* Woman, to whom ſhe committed the of the child *Moſes*, the ſame our gracious Queen, by the tenour of royal charter, hath ſaid to the Truſtees of that hoſpital, *Take theſe ldren, and nurſe them for me.* And tho' ſhe hath not yet added her l promiſe, that ſhe will out of her own treaſure defray their expen- yet from her known goodneſs they are ſecure, that the nurſery ch her own hand hath planted, ſhall by the ſame hand be water'd al- due ſeaſon. By ſuch acts of beneficence and condeſcenſion do reli- s Princes, who are the ſubſtitutes and repreſentatives of heaven here n earth, beſt reſemble the goodneſs of the Lord their God, *who dwel-* Pſal. 113. 5, 6, 7. *on high, humbleth himſelf to behold* the very meaneſt of his creatures, *raiſeth up the poor out of the duſt, and lifteth the needy out of the ghil.*

OUR *Third* obſervation was, that generous ſouls, the more kind they e been to any, the kinder they are diſpos'd ſtill to be; the more they e been exercis'd in deeds of charity, the ſtronger propenſions do they in themſelves to abound in this labour of love ſtill more and more.

OF this we have an hiſtorical inſtance in the noble Benefactreſs of the t; and of this we have a nearer and more delightful proof in the libe- contributions that have been, and are, conſtantly given to theſe cha- -ſchools. In ** one of them, which I may with the more decency le out, both becauſe of my more immediate relation to it, and be- ſe, being the firſt of this kind, it may modeſtly challenge ſome ſort of cedency by right of primogeniture, I find enroll'd in the liſt of its pre-

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The Charity-School at *Kenſington*. † The Grey-Coat Hoſpital in *Totbil-Fields*, of the Royal Foun- on of Queen *ANNE*. ** The School for Blue-Coats belonging to the New-Church in *Weſtmin-* erected A. D. 1688.

ſent Benefactors many names, which have ſtood there ſince its firſt fou
dation; and I have no reaſon to doubt, but what I know to be true,
the continual ſupport, which hath been given to the eldeſt of theſe ſi
ſters, is equally ſo in reference to the younger.

WITH perſons, not by goodneſs of nature ſtrongly diſpos'd to a
of humanity, not by the grace of God powerfully ſtirr'd up to charit
ble deeds, it may be a plauſible argument againſt expending more on th
ſame occaſion, that they have already expended very much; but thoſ
whoſe ſouls are thoroughly poſſeſs'd with an ardent deſire of doing goo
thoſe who have a juſt and lively ſenſe of the indiſpenſable obligatio
which our holy religion layeth upon us, to abound in all acts of brothe
ly love without ceaſing and without wearineſs, are us'd to argue after
different manner; and do think it a forcible motive to their contribut
cheerfully and largely towards any good work, that their liberality t
wards it hath, on former occaſions, been eminent and conſpicuous. We
the rewards promis'd to our charity ſtinted and limited, it would th
be more reaſonable, that our charity alſo ſhould be confin'd within ce
tain limits, beyond which it ſhould not paſs; but be it in its objects ne
ver ſo extenſive, be it in its meaſures never ſo much enlarg'd, be it in it
fruits never ſo luxuriant, ſure we are, that in a ſtill fuller meaſure than
Luke 6. 38. we mete withal, it ſhall be meaſur'd unto us again: *good meaſure, preſſed*
down, and ſhaken together, and running over, ſhall be given into ou
boſom.

AS theſe charity-ſchools have from their firſt erection thriven and en
creas'd by thoſe ſupplies, which have been conſtantly and liberally afforde
to them, as they have from low beginnings been gradually advanc'd t
their preſent height; ſo would the pious contributors thereto take a
eſtimate of the ſtate which their own fortunes were then in, when the
firſt reach'd forth their bounty, and compare it with their preſent ci
cumſtances, I doubt not but they would, to their comfort, find, th
their own wealth hath grown together with theſe charitable funds; tha
they have encreas'd the poor's ſtock without any decreaſe of their own
nay farther, that their own heap is become larger by thoſe ſupplie
which they have given out of it for the ſupport and maintenance of the
growing benefactions. What they have thus *lent unto the Lord* hath a-
ready been repaid them with intereſt, in private and in publick bleſſings
and they have found their charity abundantly recompens'd in thoſe gre
mercies, which God hath even in this world beſtow'd upon them, up
their families, upon our Church and nation: which yet, great as they ar
ſhall not be accounted by God as a full payment; but are only earne
and pledges of a ſtill more ample recompence at the great day of retr
bution.

OUR *Laſt* obſervation was, that children owe more to thoſe fro
whom they have their education, than they do to thoſe from who
they derive their birth.

IT is a melancholy reflection, that any ſhould be born within th
pale of the Chriſtian Church, and yet be ſtrangers to the ſaving trut
of the Goſpel: nevertheleſs it is not to be diſſembled, that there a
ſome, who live in thick *Egyptian* darkneſs, even in the midſt of Go
ſhen. It is therefore wiſely provided, that Societies ſhould be form
as well for propagating Chriſtian knowledge amongſt the ignorant a
home, as amongſt infidels abroad. By this wholſome inſtitution th
religious education, which many children did either thro' the povert

hro' the neglect of their natural parents, to their great damage want,
hro' the liberality of well-diſpos'd Chriſtians, who are their better,
ir ſpiritual parents, to their great comfort ſupplied. Many a poor
ſes, who is expos'd to the wide world, and left forlorn and helpleſs
a prey to the deſtroyer, is happily reſcu'd from perdition by the
vidential interpoſal of perſons, who finding him in this miſerable
e, and mov'd with pity of his wretched caſe, condeſcend *to lift him*
f the mire, and take care that he be put into the hands of his mo-
the Church, by her to be nurs'd, *to ſuck, and be ſatisfied with* Iſai. 66. 11, 12.
breaſts of her conſolations; *to be born upon her ſides, and to be*
lled on her knees, and by her inſtructed, not in the wiſdom of the
tians, but in a much more valuable part of learning, the ſaving
wledge of Chriſt.

y this charity ſo well deſign'd, ſo happily executed, and ſo widely
ad, that invitation, which the prophet *Iſaiah* makes in the name
hriſt, and publiſhes to all the world, is brought home to thouſands,
bove ten thouſands of poor children within this kingdom. *Ho eve-* Iſai. 55. 1.
e that thirſteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no mo-
come ye, buy and eat; *yea come, buy without money, and without*
. By the liberality of the wealthy abounding in plenty, and rich
ood works, the holy Scriptures, thoſe fountains of everlaſting life,
pen'd to the poor; to their bounty theſe poor babes owe *that ſin-* 1 Pet. 2. 2.
milk of the Word, which is freely and without price diſpens'd to
, *that they may grow thereby*; thro' their beneficence the ſpiri-
y *blind ſee, the lame walk, the lepers are cleans'd, devils are caſt* Matt. 11. 5.
the dead in ſin *are raiſed, and to the poor the Goſpel is preach'd.*
now do not thoſe, who are thus careful to ſupply the bodily and
ſpiritual wants of theſe poor deſtitute children, and to give them
a liberal and Chriſtian education, as may put them into a way of
g comfortably in this world, and of arriving at eternal bliſs in the
, highly deſerve the appellation, are they not juſtly entitul'd to the
our, not only of patrons and benefactors, but even of parents and
rs? Will not the indigent wretches, who by their paternal care
rought up *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,* be power-
interceſſors for them at the throne of grace? And if *the curſes of*
poor, which in the bitterneſs of their ſouls they pour out againſt
e who are deaf to their complaints, *ſhall be heard of him that made*
m, will not the prayers of theſe poor foſter-children, which they dai-
ffer up unto God from the bottom of their hearts, in behalf of thoſe,
om he hath made his inſtruments in ſupplying their wants, be gra-
ſly accepted by him?

F the unwearied induſtry of theſe patrons, theſe guardians, theſe pa-
s of youth, in ſolliciting charities for their adopted children, and
r frugal management in diſpenſing what they have gather'd; of their
caution, in chuſing the moſt proper objects without private views
artial regards; of their conſcientious endeavour to approve them-
s in the ſight of God, by doing ſuch things as are juſt and honeſt,
their commendable willingneſs to approve themſelves in the ſight
en alſo, by laying open a diſtinct account of their receipts and ex-
ces to publick view and ſcrutiny; of their wiſe œconomy and exact
ipline in regulating their large families in ſuch comely order and
hod, that devotions and inſtructions do in their turns ſucceed each
er in a conſtant and agreeable viciſſitude; of their pious care that

the children ſhould frequently be catechiz'd in publick, ſo that crowd of hearers may together with them be inſtructed in the doctrine, worſhip and diſcipline of our Church, which, that they may be duly reverenc'd want only to be rightly underſtood; of their ſtrict care, that the chil dren of both ſexes ſhould be plac'd under the cuſtody and inſpection o ſuch maſters and miſtreſſes, who may teach them piety and vertue, a well by their examples as by their inſtructions; of their frequent ex hortations to theſe teachers, that they would anſwer the great tru repos'd in them by a conſcientious diſcharge of their reſpective duties of their ſeaſonable admonitions to the parents of the children, that the would not by domeſtick examples of vice ſpoil the influence of tho good precepts, which had been inſtill'd into their minds at ſchool: o theſe things, I ſay, I am the more willing to make this ſhort mention becauſe I am neither afraid, that they will be thought at preſent u deſerving of theſe praiſes, nor apprehenſive, that by their remiſsneſs fo 2 Cor. 9. 4. the time to come *we, that we ſay not* they, *ſhould be aſham'd in th ſame confident boaſting.*

To the teſtimony of thoſe, who have reſorted to the publick exe ciſes of theſe poor children, or who have view'd the comely order o their proceſſions, or who have been this day eye-witneſſes of their decent and religious behaviour in the houſe of God, I appeal, whether they have not on theſe occaſions been ſtruck with delight and admiration; whether they have not acknowledg'd, that *what they have ſeen with their eyes did much exceed the fame, that they had heard*: whether they have not from the bottom of their hearts wiſh'd ſucceſs t the managers of this charity, ſaying, *The Lord proſper you, we wi you good luck in the name of the Lord.*

Of this happy ſucceſs there would be a ſtill fairer proſpect; that general reformation of manners, which is ſo much talk'd of by all pretenders to piety, ſo heartily wiſh'd by all ſincere Chriſtians, ſo mightily dreaded by the enemies of God and Godlineſs, would more ſpeedily be brought about; if, whilſt private men are thus induſtrious to prevent the farther growth of vice by an early inſtruction of thoſe, who are ye untainted with it, in the principles of Religion, publick magiſtrates would at the ſame time be equally zealous in extirpating profaneneſs a immorality, where they have already taken deep root, by a ſteady regular, and impartial execution of the laws. Thoſe who are brought u in the belief of God, and of a future ſtate, will be reſtrain'd from th by a ſenſe of their duty to their Maker and Saviour, or by fear of tho puniſhments, which are threatned to the wicked: but thoſe, who den the exiſtence of a God, and the immortality of their own ſouls; tho who have no notions of good or evil, but what ſtrike forcibly upo their ſenſes, muſt be wrought upon by other motives; they live onl for the preſent, and nothing but what is preſent can touch them; the live entirely by ſenſe, and nothing but what is ſenſible can affect them no appeals to the conſciences of ſuch men will be heard, becauſe the are paſt feeling: no arguing with them upon the principles of Religio will avail, becauſe theſe are derided and exploded by them: they g vern themſelves by no higher a principle than brutes do, and oug Prov. 26. 3. therefore to be kept in order by the ſame ſort of diſcipline: *a whip fo the horſe, a bridle for the aſs, and a rod for the fool's back,* are corrections each proportion'd to the capacities of the ſufferer. This chaſtiſement the magiſtrate owes both to the profligate, that they may, if poſſible, be

reclaim'd, and to the innocent, that they may not be infected; this
preſſion of irreligion and vice, by *executing wrath upon evil-doers*,
voice of the whole nation doth now ſeem to call for; this our reli-
us Prince hath often recommended from the throne; this God re-
res at the hands of thoſe, to whom he hath given *the ſword* of ju-
e, and from whom he expects, *that they bear it not in vain.* Rom. 13. 4.

o magiſtrates it appertains to approve themſelves parents of their
ple, by correcting thoſe ſons, that are ſtubborn and rebellious; to
e, who are the truſtees for managing theſe publick charities, belongs
milder office of parents, which conſiſts in nouriſhing, in maintain-
in inſtructing, their children: and whilſt they ſhall proceed to car-
on this good work with the ſame godly zeal, the ſame unwearied di-
nce, the ſame unſpotted integrity, the ſame prudent management,
ſame diſintereſted intentions, the ſame perfect concord and unani-
y, the ſame holy emulation unmixt with envy, there is no reaſon
doubt, but they will meet with the ſame bleſſings from the poor,
ſame encouragement from the rich, the ſame applauſes of all good
men, the ſame ſatiſfaction in their own conſciences, and the ſame be-
nediction from heaven.

SERMON XXIV.

Of Lying.

Eph. IV. 25.

Part I. *Wherefore putting away Lying, ſpeak every man Truth wit his neighbour; for we are members one of another.*

AS there is in us an earneſt deſire of happineſs, which, till we have got poſſeſſion of it, is never to be ſatisfied, never to be quench'd; ſo alſo is there in us an eager thirſ after Truth, which, till we have at laſt diſcover'd it, is never to be extinguiſh'd. God in the formation of us hath implanted in thoſe ſouls, which he breath'd into us, two noble faculties, the will and the underſtanding: the one is conſtantly and without wearineſs employ'd in the purſuit of what is good; the other is as aſſiduous and as indefatigable in the ſearch after knowledge. The underſtanding is indeed often miſguided, and takes up with error inſtead of Truth; but this is no better a proof, that falſhood is as well ſuited to the mind as Truth it ſelf is, than that evil is as agreeable to us as good, becauſe, whilſt we hunt after happineſs, we do ſometimes chuſ what inſtead of being beneficial to us, is really and in it ſelf pernicious Certain it is, that we always follow Truth, tho' we are not always ſ happy as to overtake it; we are willing to diſcern Truth from falſhoo tho' oftentimes the colours of them are ſo blended together, that w miſtake the one for the other: Truth is what our ſouls naturally thir after, tho' we ſometimes embrace error inſtead of it. For be our natur parts never ſo quick, be our diligence never ſo unwearied, be our help in the ſearch after knowledge never ſo great; yet after all the adva tages of nature, all the earneſtneſs of our endeavours, all the aſſiſtanc of art, Truth will often be above our reach, and is not to be wholly and entirely compaſs'd by us, till being receiv'd into the manſions of the bleſſed, and made partakers of the beatifick viſion, we ſhall there enjoy the communication of the *Father of lights*, and ſhall in the next world enjoy that glorious privilege, which ſome ſpeculative men have dream'd eam'd of in this, of ſeeing all things in God, and conſequently of ſeeing th him and all things elſe as they are.

But altho' we are ſhut out from the hopes of diſcovering ſeveral uths, whilſt we are here cloath'd with fleſh and blood, which may rhaps be reſerv'd for the entertainment of our faculties, *when this rtal ſhall have put on immortality*; yet we have ſtill this comfort, t what Truths we cannot with our utmoſt diligence come to the owledge of, thoſe we may be ignorant of without any danger: what uths God hath not given us the means of knowing, thoſe Truths are t neceſſary to be known and believ'd by us, in order to our attainent of everlaſting ſalvation. For that Truth, which conſiſts in the re contemplation of things, hath not ſo cloſe and inſeparable a conxion with our well-being, that the knowledge of it ſhould be abſolute- neceſſary to make us happy, or that the ignorance of it ſhould unoidably render us miſerable: but there is another ſort of Truth, which th a nearer alliance to our happineſs; which is always plac'd within r reach; which we can never fall ſhort of, but thro' our own fault; d which we therefore never do fall ſhort of, but we wound our conences, and do wrong to our immortal ſouls. We may be often deiv'd in the judgment we paſs upon things, and being our ſelves miſd may unhappily miſguide others; but tho' we are not always able know, whether our notions agree with things or not, yet we cant but know whether our words agree with our notions or not: our oughts may be wrong without our perceiving that we are under a miſke; but our words cannot be different from our thoughts, but we uſt be aware of that difference. When therefore there is a repugnance twixt what we ſay, and what we think; when by our ſpeech we ind to impoſe upon the credulity of others; when we abuſe that truſt d confidence which they have in us, ſo far as to deceive them at the ry moment we pretend to inform them aright; when we willingly, owingly, and deliberately, under a pretence of diſcloſing our thoughts to them, ſtudy to miſlead and miſguide them; ſuch a foul prevariion as this is inconſiſtent with the laws of God, and with the rules common honeſty; an act of great baſeneſs and diſingenuity in regard our ſelves, of great injuſtice and uncharitableneſs to our neighbour, great boldneſs and preſumption againſt the omniſcient God, *who rcheth our reins and hearts*; and is utterly deſtructive of that ſoety, by which we are link'd together, both as we are partakers of the me nature, and of the ſame faith; as we are men, and as we are Chriians. To obviate this great miſchief, and to remove that ſcandal, which ch an unbecoming, an unrighteous, and an unholy practice would ing upon the Chriſtian Religion, if thoſe, who profeſs the name of riſt, ſhould indulge themſelves in it, the Apoſtle St. *Paul* doth here ve this ſolemn injunction to the *Epheſians*, which is equally obligary upon all Chriſtians, *Wherefore putting away Lying, ſpeak every man uth with his neighbour*; *for we are members one of another.*

Now that we may underſtand aright both the true purport of the mmand here given, and the firmneſs of thoſe grounds on which it is ilt, I ſhall enquire,

I. What is meant by that *Lying*, which the Apoſtle here commands to be *put away*, and conſequently what that *Truth* is, which he requires *every one ſhould ſpeak to his neighbour*.

II. I SHALL enquire what that neighbour-hood is, what that rela tion of *fellow-members one to another*, by reaſon of which we a requir'd by the Apoſtle *to put away Lying*, and *to ſpeak Truth*; fo that we act repugnantly to ſuch relation and memberſhip, whe we do not *put away Lying*, or do not *ſpeak the Truth*.

Firſt THEN I am to enquire, what is meant by that *Lying*, which the Apoſtle here commands to be *put away*, and conſequently wha that *Truth* is, which he requires *every man ſhould ſpeak to his neigh bour*.

GREAT diſputes there are amongſt Moraliſts and Divines, where the nature of Lying doth properly conſiſt; how far the duty of an ho neſt, ſincere, downright man reaches; when, and in what caſes, w may depart from the Truth, without deſerving blame or cenſure, with out incurring guilt, or ſinning againſt God; whether it may not be law ful at ſome times, and in ſome circumſtances, to conceal the Truth even when we ſeem to diſcloſe it, as it is agreed on all hands to be lawful to hide it by a prudent reſerve and ſilence; whether ſpeaking Lies or untruth be not therefore only ſinful, becauſe it is prejudicial to our neighbour, or to the publick; or whether it be not in it ſelf, and in its own nature, abſtractedly from all the conſequences of it, ſo evil as to be unlawful, tho' it ſhould cauſe no prejudice at all to our neigh bour, nay tho' it ſhould promote our neighbour's, or the publick in tereſt; whether a Lie, as ſuch, is in all caſes abſolutely forbidden, ſo that no good intentions of him who uſes it, no good effects which ma follow from it, can make it lawful; or whether it be not in its own na ture indifferent, ſo that according to the variety of circumſtances it may be good or evil; good, when perform'd with a good deſign, and in or der to do our ſelves, or our neighbours, or our country ſervice by it; and bad only, when made uſe of to bad purpoſes, in order to bring abou unlawful ends, and to injure our neighbours in their fortunes, reputations or in any other their either temporal or ſpiritual intereſts. Theſe thing have been controverted not only amongſt Heathen, but alſo amongſ Chriſtian writers; and that not only amongſt the Caſuiſts of the Church of *Rome*, who in this, as well as in all other parts of practical religi are generally very looſe and extravagant, but even amongſt thoſe, who have renounc'd and wrote againſt the errors and corruptions of tha Church; and who in explaining other doctrines of Chriſtian Religio are moſt ſtrict and ſevere.

ALL theſe diſputes ſeem to have taken their riſe from the ambiguit and uncertainty of what is meant by Lying; for ſince Lying is in hol Scripture frequently condemn'd, as a groſs and heinous ſin; ſince Liar are there numbred amongſt the moſt notorious and profligate ſinners ſince the ſame endleſs and intolerable torments are there threatned again Liars, as againſt any tranſgreſſors of any kind; thoſe who think it a lowable in any caſe, or upon any view, to ſpeak that which is fals muſt deny ſuch falſe-ſpeaking to come under the Scripture-notion o Lying. If all perſons underſtood the ſame thing by Lying, they wou not probably be divided in their notions about its being in it ſelf indi ferent or ſinful; but it is plain that thoſe who uſe the ſame word, d not always underſtand by it one and the ſame thing. The notion of a Lie is a complicated notion made up of ſeveral ideas put together: hence is it, that one man, in the ſentiment which he forms of a Lie, puts in

ſomething,

omething, which another in his conception of it leaves out; and thinks
hat to be eſſential to a Lie, which is merely accidental to it: one man
hinks there can be no Lie, where what is ſaid is not in it ſelf falſe;
hilſt another thinks, that wherever there is a deſign of deceiving others
y our words, there is a Lie, tho' what is ſpoken chances to be true:
ne perſon by a Lie underſtands only ſuch a falſhood, as is prejudicial
him unto whom it is ſpoken; whilſt another thinks the prejudice
at is done by falſe-ſpeaking a great aggravation of the ſin of Lying,
here it is intended by the Liar, but that all falſe-ſpeaking is in it ſelf
Lie, and for that reaſon a ſin, tho' it doth no one elſe any prejudice.

ALL this perplexity would be avoided, and men would be able to
ttle their opinions aright concerning this matter, at leaſt ſo far as to
gulate their practices, if they would carefully define what they mean
a Lie; but then it is extremely difficult to give ſuch a definition
a Lie, which, when we come to examine it nicely, and to try our
rds and ſpeeches by it, we ſhall be willing to ſtick to, and not find
caſion, and that perhaps with good reaſon, upon farther conſidera-
n, to alter. For great care is to be taken, that in explaining what
meant by a Lie, what that Lying is, from which we are commanded
holy Scripture to abſtain under the penalty of everlaſting damnation,
be neither too ſtrict, nor too looſe; that, on the one ſide, we do
raſhly lay down ſuch a notion of Lying, as will conclude thoſe un-
the guilt of this heinous ſin, whom we cannot without uncharita-
neſs, or impiety, or even blaſphemy, involve in ſuch guilt; and
, on the other ſide, we do not allow ſo great a latitude, that thoſe,
o are moſt guilty of this ſin, will, according to ſuch looſe notions,
blameleſs or excuſable. If we ſhould go to fix the limits of what is
nt by Lying, from the authority of thoſe, who have treated of this
ject, we ſhould find almoſt as many different definitions of a Lie, as
e are different writers, who have undertaken to define it: if we
ld chooſe out one of thoſe definitions from amongſt the reſt, or
ld attempt to ſubſtitute a new one of our own, which to us ſeem'd
er and more unexceptionable; upon a cloſer view of it, when we
e to apply it, we might perhaps find juſt grounds to diſlike and re-
it. I ſhall therefore proceed more regularly, more diſtinctly, and,
hope, more clearly and intelligibly, if I endeavour to open the na-
of Lying by degrees, than if I ſhould go about at once to give you
ll and complete definition of it.

Now there would be no room for this ſin of Lying, no occaſion,
poſſibility of our committing it, had not God enabled us to com-
nicate our inward thoughts and ſentiments to each other by the uſe
utward ſigns; and our gracious and good God would not have given
ſuch a faculty as this, had he not intended it for our benefit, and
our mutual good. Had God in his infinite wiſdom known, that it
ld have been more for the univerſal benefit of mankind, that all
thoughts, which each man harbour'd in his own breaſt, ſhould be
en from all other men, than that they ſhould upon any occaſion
rt their notions one to another, he would have made it impoſſible
them to reveal their thoughts to each other by words; but becauſe
aw, that ſociety could no other ways be kept up and maintain'd
ngſt the ſons of men, but by this reciprocal communication of their
ughts, he therefore in his infinite goodneſs beſtow'd on them this abi-
of carrying on an intercourſe in exchanging their thoughts by the

help of outward ſigns: this our Maker intended as a bleſſing to us; for this bleſſing we ought to be thankful to his holy name; and to make uſe of it for that purpoſe, for which he in his ineffable bounty towards us did intend it. But as it is in our power to abuſe all the gifts of God; ſo is it to make a wrong uſe of this, which is one of the chief advantages and privileges of our nature: as many ways as we may convey to others our true ſentiments; ſo many ways may we form in them wrong ones, and by that means abuſe thoſe faculties to the detriment and wrong of our brethren, which were given us in order to our doing them good, and promoting their intereſt and happineſs.

THERE is no abſolute neceſſity of words either for the manifeſtatio of the Truth, or for drawing of others into an error; theſe indeed are the principal and moſt uſual means of expreſſing or of diſguiſing ou thoughts, but theſe are not the only ones; as we may lie by words, ſ alſo may we by actions, by geſtures, and in ſome circumſtances, and on ſome occaſions, even by ſilence it ſelf: for ſince all, or any of theſe, may be made uſe of as ſigns to expreſs our minds, they may all, or any of them, be miſapplied by us to the deceiving of others, and co ſequently come within the notion of Lying. As for inſtance, if any one ſhould agree with us, that he would expreſs his aſſent to what we ſay by his ſilence, and his diſſent by ſpeaking; and if afterwards, contrary to this poſitive agreement, he ſhould then hold his tongue, whe he diſſented from us; no one could excuſe ſuch ſilence from *the guil* of a Lie. Nor can it be here pleaded, that one who in ſuch a caſe deceives us, not by falſe-ſpeaking, but by falſly and fraudulently holdin his tongue and forbearance to ſpeak, did then indeed tell a Lie, whe he in expreſs words promis'd, that he would not in ſuch caſe hold hi tongue; but that he doth not lie, when he is ſilent, becauſe he doth not ſay any thing; this I ſay cannot be fairly pleaded, ſince at this ra of arguing, it might as reaſonably be affirm'd, that a perſon, who, bein upon his oath, aſſerts what he knows to be falſe, is not perjur'd whe he makes ſuch a falſe aſſertion, but was then only forſworn, when h bound himſelf by oath to affirm nothing but what he knew to b True.

NOW if men may be guilty of the ſin of Lying, when they are ſil as well as when they ſpeak; if even dumb perſons, who never ſpeak, may yet contrive ways of Lying; if they may in the ſight of God b as notorious Liars, and render themſelves as obnoxious to his wr for their Lies, as the falſeſt and moſt deceitful talkers; if other ſig may be as expreſſive of our thoughts as words, and be abus'd to *the* co veying into the minds of others wrong thoughts, as well as *words* the ſelves may; then are thoſe miſtaken, who reſtrain the ſin of Lyi the ſin here and elſewhere in Scripture forbidden, to mens ſpeaking th which is falſe; ſince this ſin may be committed by men, and is undou edly ſometimes committed, where there is not one word ſpoken.

BUT ſince in common ſpeech, as well as in the language of the lea ed, thoſe methods of impoſing upon others, and deluding them w falſe appearances into error, which are put in execution without t uſe of words, are generally diſtinguiſh'd from Lies ſtrictly and prop ly ſo call'd; ſince words are the moſt uſual ways of conveying our ſe timents to others, and conſequently of deceiving others by miſrep ſenting our thoughts to them; ſince whatſoever is ſaid of the wrong a ſinful uſe of theſe ſigns, is eaſily applicable to the abuſe of any oth ſig

ns; ſince the Apoſtle St. *Paul* here in the text makes mention only of
t Lying which we ought to *put away*, and of that Truth which we
ght to obſerve, when we ſpeak to each other; having premis'd this
ſervation, that we may offend againſt the laws of Truth by other ways,
well as by falſe-ſpeaking, I ſhall ſay no more of thoſe other leſs uſual
ys of deception, in which, as being leſs cuſtomary, we are leſs like-
to be concern'd; but confine my ſelf only to that more common,
re known, and more practis'd ſort of Lying, which men are guilty
in their ſpeaking to each other.

A PERSON is by ſome writers ſaid to be guilty of Lying, when he
nks one thing, and ſpeaks another: but ſince there lies no obliga-
n on any one to tell always what he thinks; ſince thus to diſcover
our thoughts is in many caſes highly imprudent, and in ſome cir-
nſtances uncharitable and unjuſt; a man may certainly without Ly-
, without ſin, without offending God, or wounding his own con-
nce, think of thoſe things of which he doth not ſpeak, provided he
careful to ſpeak nothing but what he really thinks.

OTHERS therefore by a Lie underſtand a voluntary declaration of
t which is falſe with an intention thereby to deceive; ſo that, ac-
ding to the notion of theſe men, three things muſt all neceſſarily
cur to the making up a Lie; the ſpeaking of ſomething which is
e; a deſign of ſpeaking what is falſe; and alſo an intention to de-
e the perſon, to whom ſuch falſhood is ſpoken. Now, if this be
ue and adequate notion of a Lie, then, unleſs all theſe things meet
ether, there is no Lie, the ſin of Lying is not committed; and where
heſe three things do meet, there muſt be a Lie, there the guilt of
ing muſt of neceſſity be contracted. But there is no doubt, but that
re may be a Lie ſpoken, the ſin of Lying may be faln into, where
e of theſe things are wanted; and it may perhaps with good reaſon
doubted, whether there always be committed the ſin of Lying, where
the things fore-mention'd do concur. The falſhood of what is ſpo-
cannot certainly be eſſential to a Lie: for tho' a man ſhould ſpeak
t which is really true; yet if when he ſpeaks it, he thinks it to be
e, he is without doubt guilty of the ſin of Lying. For as in gene-
, whoſoever doth knowingly and deliberately do any action what-
ver, which his conſcience tells him is by the law of God forbidden,
guilty in the ſight of God of a great and heinous ſin, tho' that action
only unlawful in his erroneous opinion, and is not at all repugnant
the Word of God; ſo in like manner, he who in order to deceive and
er-reach his neighbour, tells unto him what he is verily perſwaded is
ſe, is in the ſight of God guilty of Lying to his neighbour, tho' what
by him falſly and deceitfully ſpoken doth, contrary to his opinion and
tention, happen to be true.

THOSE therefore who make falſhood eſſential to a Lie, when they
me to explain themſelves, are careful to diſtinguiſh betwixt what
ey in hard words call logical and moral falſhood; by the former, they
derſtand the diſagreement there is between what we ſay of things,
d what ſuch things in reality are; by the latter, the contrariety there
betwixt our words and our thoughts: the former we may fall into,
d very often do fall into, out of miſtake; the latter we cannot be
uilty of without our own fault: the former therefore doth make what
e ſay to be an error; but the latter only makes it to be a Lie: from
he former we cannot be ſecure, unleſs we were, what the Biſhop of

Rome vainly pretends to be, infallible; but from the latter we may always free, if we are but honeſt and ſincere men. But according this diſtinction betwixt a logical and a moral falſhood, or, to ſpeak mo intelligibly, betwixt a miſtake and a Lie, two of thoſe qualificatio which are ſaid to make the notion of a Lie, do at laſt come to no mo than one. For to what purpoſe is it to make any difference betw the falſhood of what is ſpoken, and the intention of ſpeaking what falſe; ſince it matters not, whether what is ſaid be in it ſelf falſe or n provided he who ſaith it, doth, when he ſaith it, take it to be falſe? W muſt therefore wholly exclude out of the notion of a Lie the falſho of what is ſaid, or its repugnancy to the Truth of things: for a m of veracity and a Liar are not to be diſtinguiſh'd from one another the one's being in the right, and the other's being in the wrong, in wh they ſeverally affirm; but by the one's honeſtly ſpeaking what he fr his heart thinks, tho' he doth perhaps think wrong, and is miſtaken what he aſſerts; whilſt the other falſly and diſhoneſtly ſpeaks what i his heart he doth not think, tho' what he ſpeaks may happen to be tru The Truth of what is ſaid will not excuſe him from the guilt of a Li who ſpeaks Truth, but doth not himſelf believe what he would hav others believe; and the falſhood of what is ſpoken will not make him guilty of a Lie, who truly believes what he ſaith, and what he woul have others believe, tho' what he ſaith be in it ſelf falſe.

AND as the actual ſpeaking of what is falſe is not neceſſary to mak a Lie; ſo alſo may it be juſtly queſtion'd, whether even an intention o ſpeaking what is falſe be ſo neceſſary an ingredient of a Lie, that wher there is no ſuch intention, there can be no Lie. For let us ſuppo that a perſon ſpeaks Truth with a purpoſe to lead others thereby into belief of that which is falſe; doth not ſuch ſpeaking of Truth, with ſuch an evil and malicious intention, come within the notion of Lying? Doth it not as much tend to deceive our neighbour, may it not conduce as much to his prejudice, and is it not therefore as injurious, as deſtructive to the ends of ſociety, and by conſequenee as criminal, as downright Lying? Poſſible it is, that a perſon may deliver Truth in ſuch a man ner, may ſpeak it with ſuch an air, that he to whom it is ſpoken, may be miſled by the very way of delivering it, to apprehend it to be falſe Now he who ſpeaks Truth in ſuch a manner, with ſuch a deſign, doth as much deceive his brother, and as much intend to deceive him, as if he ſpoke what he knew to be falſe, and being as much a deceiver, may perhaps as juſtly be look'd upon as a Liar. Some perſons may, by a con ſtant and habitual courſe of Lying, have deſervedly got ſuch a characte in the world, that men will with good reaſon judge of what they mean by the contrary of what they ſay: whatever they in words affirm, that thoſe who hear them will be inclin'd to diſbelieve, becauſe they affirm it; and what they deny, that thoſe to whom they addreſs themſelves will be apt to believe true, for that very reaſon becauſe they deny it and perhaps the ſtronger their aſſeverations are, the more diſpos'd wi thoſe who hear them, and who know them, be to reject, as probably falſe, what they ſo boldly aſſert, and to receive, as in all likelihood true, what they ſo peremptorily deny. Now ſhall perſons of this infamous character, and ſuch perſons it is to be fear'd there really are to be met with in the world, ſpeak what they think, and thereby impoſe upon others? Or ſhall they ſpeak contrary to what they think, that ſo others may not be deceiv'd by them? If thoſe are Liars, who ſpeak contrary

to

what they think, then theſe men are Liars, when they ſpeak what
ey do not think, tho' they ſhould do it with an honeſt intention, that
hers may not be deceiv'd by them: if thoſe are Liars, who intend to
upoſe upon others, then theſe men are guilty of Lying, even when
ey ſpeak what they think, becauſe they ſpeak it on purpoſe to beguile
hers. Shall we therefore judge ſuch men as theſe Liars in both caſes,
ether they ſpeak what is true, or whether they ſpeak what is falſe?
rs, when they ſpeak what is Truth, becauſe they do it with a ſet
rpoſe to deceive; and Liars alſo, when they ſpeak what is falſe, be-
ſe there is a repugnancy betwixt their tongues and their hearts, their
rds and their thoughts? Or ſhall we judge them Liars in neither
e; not when they ſpeak true, becauſe their words agree with their
ughts; not when they ſpeak falſe, becauſe they do it with an in-
tion that their hearers may not be deceiv'd?

T ſeems to me, that the intention of deceiving others by what we
is ſo abſolutely neceſſary to conſtitute a Lie, that where this inten-
is wanting, there no Lie is ſpoken, tho' what is ſaid be falſe, and
trary to the thoughts of the ſpeaker; and where this evil intention
here is a Lie, tho' what is ſaid be otherwiſe true, and agreeable to
thoughts of him who ſpeaks it. For ſince the end of ſpeech is,
he who uſes it ſhould convey his own thoughts to him, to whom
peaks; he who makes uſe of ſuch words, as he thinks will lead ano-
into a wrong opinion, is guilty of perverting the end of ſpeech, be-
e his words, how agreeable ſoever they are to his own thoughts, are
ded, not to communicate his ſentiments, but to diſguiſe them. For
s have different ſenſes according to the different apprehenſions of
e, to whom they are addreſs'd; he therefore who knows that he, to
m he ſpeaks, will underſtand his words in a wrong ſenſe, and who
them for that very reaſon, that the hearer by miſunderſtanding
may be impos'd upon, tho' the words he ſpeaks, in their literal
grammatical ſenſe, do truly expreſs his thoughts, doth yet abuſe
to the miſguiding his brother, and doth by reaſon of ſuch pervert-
the end, for which God gave us the faculty of ſpeaking, ſeem juſtly
eſerve the name of a Liar.

HAT hath been hitherto diſcours'd about the true and proper no-
of Lying is, I am ſenſible, ſomewhat nice, and difficult to be un-
ood by ordinary capacities; but being to prove the ſinfulneſs of
ng, I thought it proper in the firſt place to ſettle the true notion
hat we mean by Lying, when we condemn it as ſinful. Wicked
crafty men have taken great pains to perplex this matter, on pur-
to evade the force of thoſe arguments, which are brought from
on, or from Scripture, to prove the ſinfulneſs of Lying: great cau-
therefore is to be us'd in ſtating the nature of a Lie, leſt we ſhould
er load ſuch forms of ſpeech with the heinous guilt of Lying, which,
cloſer examination, will be found harmleſs, or leſt we ſhould per-
ſuch ways of ſpeaking to eſcape this imputation, which men of re-
wits have employ'd their inventions to contrive for the deluding
cheating their neighbours, without incurring the odious name of
s.

Y what hath been diſcours'd the nature of Lying ſeems to me to
ſiſt in the intention of the ſpeaker to deceive by his ſpeech: whe-
what is ſaid be in it ſelf true or falſe; whether it agrees with the
ghts of him who ſpeaks it, or not; yet if it plainly tends to deceive

the hearer; if he, who ſaith it, perceives this tendency; if he uſes it to this end, however diſguis'd it is, under whatever forms it be expreſs'd, it is to all intents and purpoſes a Lie; it involves the ſpeaker in the guilt of Lying; it expoſes him to the puniſhment threatned againſt Liars. And, on the other ſide, if this intention be wanting, tho' what is ſpoken be falſe; tho' it doth not agree with the thoughts of him, who ſpeaks it; yet it is not properly a Lie; it is not at leaſt ſuch a Lie as is condemn'd, either by reaſon or by Scripture. Hence if any one who is alone, without the hearing of any other perſon, ſhould pronounce a ſentence, which he knows to be utterly falſe; yet becauſe there is no one who hears him, no one who is capable of being deceiv'd by him, ſuch perſon cannot be deem'd, on account of ſuch private falſe-ſpeaking, to be a Liar. Or if any one in diſcourſe to another ſhould tell him, that what he is going to ſpeak is diſagreeable to Truth, and that it is not expected or deſir'd that he ſhould give his aſſent to it, what ſhall be affirm'd after ſuch a declaration, tho' falſe, and known to be ſo, will not deſerve the opprobrious name of a Lie. In both theſe caſes, what is ſaid is contrary to the mind of the ſpeaker; but becauſe there is no deception intended in either caſe, there is no Lie ſpoken; the ſin of Lying is not committed.

HENCE alſo poems, fables, parables, and figurative ways of ſpeaking are free from the guilt of Lies; becauſe wiſe and good men uſe them, and have the examples of even inſpir'd writers to *juſtifie them* in the uſe thereof, without any the leaſt deſign of impoſing upon the belief of others by them; and would not uſe them, if they ſaw any danger, any likelihood, of miſleading others by the uſe of them. Hence alſo thoſe forms of ſpeech, which by long cuſtom and receiv'd uſage are brought to have a different meaning from what they had formerly, or what the literal ſenſe of them imports, may be uſ'd by good Chriſtians without any ſcruple or fear of offending God thereby; becauſe being underſtood in that ſenſe which later cuſtom hath fix'd upon them, there is no danger that men ſhould be impos'd upon by the uſe of them. As for inſtance, no one, I think, will accuſe him of a Lie, who, according to the eſtabliſh'd modes of civility, profeſſes himſelf to be that man's humble ſervant, whom he doth not thereby own to be his Lord and maſter, and to whom he is not diſpos'd to render that homage and obedience, which is due from a ſervant to his maſter; becauſe, by common uſage, ſuch forms are by every one underſtood to mean no more than a civil reſpect, tho' in the rigour of the letter they import ſomething higher. Hence in thoſe places, where men are train'd up to the art of diſputing, it hath been always thought allowable, that ſome ſhould for argument-ſake oppoſe what they know to be true; becauſe ſuch feign'd oppoſitions are underſtood to be uſ'd not for the overthrowing, but for the better eſtabliſhment of the Truth; not to lead them into error, but to inform them how to guard and fence againſt it. Hence alſo honeſt and conſcientious perſons do, without any ſcruple, make uſe of falſe arguments to work upon children, ſick perſons, or thoſe who are diſorder'd in mind, in order to prevail with them to do what may be for their advantage; becauſe they ſuppoſe that ſuch perſons are not capable of judging of the force of the arguments, nor conſequently in danger of being ſeduc'd by them: all which they intend is to convey true notions into the minds of thoſe, whom they would work upon: they would perſwade them of the miſchief of that which

they

ey dehort them from, and of the benefit of that which they adviſe
m to; and their intention being, not to deceive but to inſtruct, they
nk themſelves guiltleſs, and hope by God to be acquitted as guiltleſs,
the ſin of Lying. But no honeſt and ſincere perſon will make uſe of
e ſpeeches to work upon perſons of ſound minds, and clear judg-
nts; becauſe ſuch perſons will judge of the weight of the arguments
d, and therefore where falſe ones are uſ'd, will be in danger of being
uded by them.

MANY other inſtances might be given, where perſons of the ſtricteſt
nciples, and greateſt ſincerity, and ſuch as would not indulge them-
ves in the commiſſion of a known, and eſpecially of a ſin ſo heinous,
Lying is in holy Scripture repreſented to be; do ſpeak ſuch things
iffer from their inward ſentiments; becauſe having no deſign there-
to impoſe upon the credulity of others, they think themſelves inno-
t from the ſin of Lying.

Y what hath been ſaid it ſeems plain enough, that only ſuch falſe
eches are properly Lies, which are uſ'd with a deſign of deceiving
ers thereby: for ſince Lying is therefore forbidden by our Apoſtle,
auſe it tends to the over-reaching of our neighbour, and Truth is
refore commanded, becauſe it is one of thoſe ſocial duties, to which
are oblig'd as *fellow-members one of another*; where there is no de-
ion of our neighbour intended, there can be no Lying; where there
o one to be inform'd of our thoughts, there can be no room for ſpeak-
of Truth.

UT tho' it is plain that there can be no Lying, where there is no
ntion of deceiving any one; yet ſtill it may be queſtion'd, whether
erever there is this intention, there Lying is a ſin. For it ſhould ſeem
Lying is here by the Apoſtle forbidden, becauſe it is to the injury
ur neighbour, and the ſpeaking of Truth commanded, becauſe it is
his benefit: if therefore in any caſe Lying may be for our neigh-
r's advantage, and ſpeaking of Truth may tend to his damage, it may
n that ſuch harmleſs, ſuch beneficial Lying doth not fall within the
hibition of the Apoſtle; which ought not to be extended farther,
n the reaſon, for which it is forbidden, doth extend. But what judg-
nt is to be paſs'd concerning ſuch falſe-ſpeaking, which doth no
any wrong, if there be any ſuch, and which deceives people, not
their prejudice, but to their benefit, we ſhall be better able to de-
mine, when we ſhall have enquir'd what we propos'd in the ſecond
ce to enquire into; namely, what that neighbourhood is, what
t relation of fellow-memberſhip one to another, by reaſon of which
are by the Apoſtle commanded to *put away Lying*, and to *ſpeak*
uth. But having dwelt too long on the former head, I muſt defer
farther proſecution of this ſubject, and the application of what hath
n already deliver'd, to another opportunity.

SERMON XXV.

Of Lying.

Eph. IV. 25.

Part II. *Wherefore putting away Lying, ſpeak every man Truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another.*

In order to our underſtanding aright both the true purport of the Apoſtolical injunction here given, and alſo the firmneſs of those grounds on which it is built, I propos'd to ſhew,

I. What is meant by that *Lying*, which the Apoſtle here commands to be *put away*, and conſequently what that *Truth* is which he requires *every one ſhould ſpeak to his neighbour.*

II. What that neighbourhood is, what that relation of fellow-members one to another, by reaſon of which we are requir'd by the Apoſtle to *put away Lying*, and to *ſpeak Truth*; ſo that we act repugnantly to ſuch relation and memberſhip, when we do not put *away Lying*, or do not *ſpeak the Truth.*

In treating of the *firſt* head I have ſhewn, that the nature of Lying doth properly and preciſely conſiſt in the intention of the ſpeaker to deceive by his ſpeech; that whether what is ſaid be in it ſelf true, or falſe; whether it be agreeable to the thoughts of him who ſpeaks it, or not; yet if it manifeſtly tends to deceive the hearer; if it be us'd to this end and purpoſe; then, however artificial and diſguis'd it is, under whatever forms it is expreſs'd, it is to all intents and purpoſes a Liar; it involves the ſpeaker in the guilt of Lying; it expoſes him, without repentance, to the puniſhment threatned in Scripture againſt Liars. If therefore we would avoid the ſin of Lying; if we would eſcape the imputation of Liars; if we would be ſecure from the vengeance denounc'd by God in his Word againſt Liars; if we would by *ſpeaking Truth to our neighbours* approve our ſelves to our own conſciences, and to God, *the God of Truth, and the ſearcher of our reins and hearts*; we must never

ver by our ſpeech, which was given us to inform others of our ſen- nents, lead them into a miſconception of our thoughts; we muſt abuſe that truſt and confidence, which thoſe with whom we con- ſe place in us, ſo far, as to deceive them at that very moment, when pretend to diſcloſe our thoughts to them; we muſt not by miſlead- thoſe, who, being in the dark, commit themſelves to our guidance, olve our ſelves in that curſe, which is by the divine law threatned, will by the divine juſtice be certainly inflicted on all thoſe, *who* Deut. 27. 18. *e the blind to wander out of the way.*

How great the ſin of Lying is, how indiſpenſable the obligation of king Truth, will more plainly appear, when we ſhall have enquir'd, he

econd PLACE, what that neighbourhood is, what that relation of w-members one to another, by reaſon of which we are requir'd the Apoſtle to *put away Lying*, and to *ſpeak Truth*; ſo that we act gnantly to ſuch relation and memberſhip, when we do not *put away ng*, or do not *ſpeak the Truth*.

HERE are very many and very different bonds, by which we are to each other; the cloſer and the ſtraiter theſe bonds are, the ſtronger greater will be our obligation to ſpeak the Truth. The firſt and t remote degree of affinity, which joins all men to one another in common bond of ſociety, is deriv'd from their agreeing in one and ſame common nature. We are all partakers of the ſame powers hinking, reaſoning, and ſpeaking; and by this ſharing the ſame ılties ſtand diſtinguiſh'd from all other Beings, and are united to each her, as individuals of the ſame kind. This wide and extenſive rela- of men to one another, or of all to all, was always look'd upon ery ſacred and inviolable amongſt the *Heathen* Moraliſts; and would doubtedly have been eſteem'd by them ſtill more ſacred, if they could e any ways diſcover'd, what the Word of God hath reveal'd to us, all men, every where, how diſtant ſoever in time and place, de- their original from the ſame common ſtock; are of one and the e parentage; do all belong to the ſame family; and conſequently allied to one another, not only in nature, but alſo in blood. He o *gave to us life, and breath, and all things*, hath convey'd his gifts Acts. 17. 25, 26. us in ſuch a manner, that he *hath made of one blood all nations of n, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.*

I SHALL paſs by thoſe ſeveral kinds of relation, by which men are cloſer link'd together, as being of the ſame nation, city, ſtock, kin- d, or family; becauſe I haſten to that ſtill cloſer and nearer relation have to each other, as we are fellow-Chriſtians. The philoſophers k'd upon no relation ſo ſacred, as that which men ſtood in to the ntry, under whoſe laws they liv'd: they taught their ſcholars, that y ought to look upon their friends, their kinſmen, their children, ir parents, as near to them; but that their country ought to be eem'd ſtill nearer and dearer to them, than any of theſe. But the ion of Chriſtians, gather'd together in one and the ſame Church, is more intimate, than that of fellow-citizens incorporated into one d the ſame common-wealth: ſo cloſe is the communion of believers e among another, that it is ſcarce expreſſible by any of thoſe words, ich are made uſe of to repreſent to us any other kinds of union; ſcarce nceivable by our moſt piercing thoughts. Such as is the conjunction thoſe members, which derive vital ſpirits from the ſame head, and

being

being knit cloſely together conſtitute the ſame body; ſuch, or cloſer than this, is the conjunction of Chriſtians, who, as the Apoſtle hath taught us in this chapter, are *one body*, enliven'd by *one Spirit*; ar *call'd in one hope of their calling*, are ſubject to *one Lord*, profeſs *faith*, are initiated by *one baptiſm*, worſhip *one God*, who being th common *Father of all*, unites them as brethren to one another, a *being above all, and thro' all, and in them all*, doth by an indiſſolubl bond unite them to himſelf in *Chriſt, which is the head*; *from wh the whole body fitly joyn'd together, and compacted by that which ev ry joynt ſupplieth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure every part, maketh increaſe of the body, unto the edifying of it ſelf love.* This full and emphatical deſcription of the ſociety of Chriſtian ſet out by the Apoſtle in ſuch a variety and exact choice of words, ex preſſeth to us a communion, or rather an union, than which none can be imagin'd more ſtrait, more cloſe, or more intimate; ſo that all thoſe duties toward each other, which are founded in our being neighbours, or fellow-members of the ſame ſociety, are ſo much the more obligatory to Chriſtians, by how much the firmer thoſe bonds are, by which they are joyn'd together.

SINCE therefore the fundamental duties of thoſe, who live in ſociety together, are, firſt that they ſhould be careful to abſtain from doing each other any the leaſt hurt; and in the next place, that they ſhould induſtriouſly and to the utmoſt of their power promote each other's good and ſince Lies do generally, if not always, tend to the hurt of thoſe wh are deceiv'd by them, and Truth doth for the moſt part, if not conſtantly, contribute to the good of thoſe to whom it is imparted; there can be no doubt but that an honeſt man, and much more a pious Chriſtian, is indiſpenſably oblig'd to *put away* all ſuch *Lying*, as is prejudicial to his neighbour, and to *ſpeak* thoſe *Truths*, which are beneficial to him. If therefore it be always an hurt to be deceiv'd, then all Lying will be ſinful; becauſe by it we do always deceive our brethren to their hurt: and if all ſpeaking of Truth be in all circumſtances adva tageous to our brethren, then it will be our duty to ſpeak the Truth at all times; becauſe it is our duty, as far as in us lies, to ſeek the advantage of our brethren.

BUT it is alleg'd, that tho' we are naturally deſirous of Truth, ye it is ſometimes for our good to be deceiv'd; for by falſe ſpeeches, ſ ſome, innocent perſons may be protected; angry men may be appeas' thoſe who are dejected may be comforted; unruly ſubjects may be kep in obedience; wicked men may be diſſwaded from evil purpoſes; goo men may be excited to commendable actions; it is for the advantage o men to be miſtaken and miſled in all theſe, and innumerable other the lik inſtances, and therefore we may, without violating the laws of ſociety without doing any injury to our neighbours, ſpeak otherwiſe than w think, in order to lead them into ſuch, not only harmleſs, but eve profitable, miſtakes. If indeed a deſign to deceive were in it ſelf evil, i it were contrary to any expreſs law of God, then it is allow'd, that i could not be made honeſt by the good intention of a good end; but the queſtion here is, whether it be not, in ſome circumſtances, ſo much for the advantage of men to be deceiv'd, that in thoſe circumſtances Lying, if it is to be call'd by ſo ill a name, or falſe-ſpeaking be not honeſt, becauſe it is highly advantageous. For in favour of ſuch Lies it is pleaded, that no injury can be done to any one, but what is againſt e will of the perſon injur'd; but all men are willing, nay even deſirous, be deceiv'd, when it will be for their good; and therefore all men ay be deceiv'd in ſuch caſes without doing them wrong. Thus it is unjuſt thing to detain from any man what of right belongs to him; t to keep another's ſword from him, when he would do himſelf or her men miſchief with it, is therefore lawful, becauſe it is expedient. like manner it is pretended, that to ſpeak Truth to him who will ke a good uſe of it, is juſt and charitable; but that to tell a man uth, when it will do him or others miſchief, is unkind, inhuman, d therefore diſhoneſt.

Now it muſt be own'd, that theſe arguments, by which ſome en- vour to prove the lawfulneſs, or even the obligation of officious s, or of deceiving others to their ſuppos'd benefit, do at firſt ſight pear very plauſible; and it muſt alſo be acknowledg'd, that ſuch Lies theſe have been patroniz'd by ſome men of great learning, and great ty, who may be ſuppos'd to be too knowing not to diſcern evil from od, and too religious to repreſent that as good or harmleſs, which y in their own judgments thought to be evil. But notwithſtanding at has been, or may be, pleaded in behalf of ſuch officious Lies either m the reaſon of the thing, or from authority, I think there will be danger of our yielding to the force of ſuch arguments, or to the ight of ſuch teſtimonies, if we attend to the true grounds, upon ich our obligation to put away Lying, not only one ſort of Lying, Lying in general, and to ſpeak the Truth, without any diſtinction uſeful and hurtful Truths, is here built by the Apoſtle.

THERE would no benefit accrue to ſociety by ſpeech, unleſs men an expreſs or tacit covenant had agreed, or unleſs by ſome ſuperior antecedent law they were oblig'd, whenever they profeſs to open ir minds one to another, to do it with ſincerity. They may con- l their ſentiments, where no one hath a right to know them, by ſi- ce; but whenever they make uſe of words, they pretend thereby to ſcover their thoughts, concerning the ſubject they ſpeak of; and there- e are falſe to their brethren, if they do not really perform what ey pretend. This diſcovery of their thoughts will be generally uſeful thoſe to whom it is made; but ſometimes, and in ſome circumſtances, may chance to prove hurtful. But if men ſhould think it then only eir duty to ſpeak their real thoughts, when it would be for the ſer- ce of others, and ſhould eſteem themſelves at liberty to ſpeak contra- to what they think, and to beguile others, when a Lie might be ore ſerviceable to them, no one could at any time with any ſecurity elieve another; becauſe no one could be aſſur'd, that he who expects be believ'd, doth not think it lawful for ſome good end, known to e ſpeaker, but unknown to the hearer, to ſpeak that for Truth, which judges to be falſe; ſo that the mutual truſt and confidence, which e abſolutely neceſſary for the ſupport of ſociety, being upon this ſup- oſition deſtroy'd, ſociety it ſelf could not upon theſe terms ſubſiſt.

Now it is not eaſie to conceive how this great miſchief could be pre- ented, unleſs right reaſon and Religion had made it unlawful for men deceive others by lying words, even where it is for their advantage be deceiv'd. For tho' a Lie may, in ſome circumſtances, do no miſ- hief to him unto whom it is ſpoken; nay, tho' it may do him ſervice, et is it to be baniſh'd from all civil commerce, it is much more to be voided by all ſincere Chriſtians, becauſe of the great and irreparable miſchief, which the allowance of it, in any caſe, would do to ſociety. It is no proof therefore that a Lie is innocent, becauſe it impoſes upon one who is willing to be deceiv'd; or becauſe it is for the intereſt of him who is deceiv'd by it; or becauſe it doth hurt only to one whom we may lawfully hurt, as for inſtance, a publick enemy; becauſe ſtill it tends to the weakning of that confidence, which ought to be kept up between men, and by that means to the detriment of ſociety; and conſequently will in the iſſue, if allow'd, prove injurious to thoſe, who have no mind to be deceiv'd, and who ought not to be deceiv'd. It is dangerous for us to make diſtinctions, where the law of God hath made none; Lying is very frequently condemn'd in Scripture, without any exception of harmleſs, inoffenſive, or officious Lies: we are to ſubmit to the authority of God commanding or forbidding, whether we are let into the reaſons of the precept or prohibition, or are not. We may be miſtaken in the reaſons, which we frame to our ſelves, why God requires ſuch a thing to be done, or to be left undone; and gueſſing falſly at the reaſons of his laws, may fancy our ſelves exempt from the obligation of the law, in ſuch caſes, to which, as we imagine, the reaſon of the law doth not extend. But even in ſuch duties, the grounds of which we are able to diſcover, or which grounds are reveal'd to us together with the law, it is no ways inconſiſtent with the wiſdom and holineſs of God to make the duties themſelves of perpetual and unalterable obligation, tho' the reaſon, for which ſuch duties are enjoyn'd, doth not hold in *all* thoſe caſes, in which the performance of that duty is requir'd. Rom. 13. 1. Thus *ſubjection to the higher powers* is by God commanded, and reſiſtance to them is forbidden, under the penalty of *receiving to our ſelves damnation*: v. 2. and one of the grounds aſſign'd for this ſubjection and patient ſubmiſſion is, becauſe *Rulers are a terrour to evil works*, and *are the ministers of God to us for good.* v. 3, 4. But it was never, till of late, held to be ſound reaſon, or ſound divinity, that where this reaſon of ſubmiſſion ceaſes; where Rulers are not a terrour to evil works; where they are not the miniſters of good to us; there the precept of ſubmiſſion to them no longer obliges; there we are at liberty to reſiſt the ſupreme Power, without wounding our conſciences, without offending againſt the law of God.

Many other inſtances might be given of laws by God enjoyn'd, and of reaſons aſſign'd for the obſervance of thoſe laws, where, tho' the reaſons do not extend to all caſes, yet the laws do in all caſes equally oblige. Tho' therefore it ſhould be allow'd that Lying is therefore forbidden by God, becauſe it is prejudicial to our neighbours; tho' it ſhould happen that in ſome caſes Lying might prove, not hurtful but uſeful; yet it will not from hence follow that Lying, which is in general terms forbidden, would be in any caſes innocent and allowable. If it be once laid down as an avow'd maxim, that men may innocently tell ſuch Lies, as promote their neighbour's good, I don't ſee why they ſhould be forbidden to advance their own intereſt alſo by Lying; ſince no one's intereſt can be dearer to him than his own. Officious Lies are without doubt much leſs heinous, much more excuſable than miſchievous ones; but they may ſtill be ſins, tho' not of the moſt heinous kind; they are faults, if they want to be excus'd. Tho' we are diſpos'd eaſily to forgive thoſe, who never allow themſelves to ſpeak what is falſe, but when they may do their neighbour a good turn by it; yet we cannot but more eſteem, and commend, and reverence thoſe perſons, and pay

more entire deference to their word, who think it not allowable to
ak that which is falſe, in any caſe, or for any end whatſoever. This
int is very judiciouſly determin'd by a *Greek* Philoſopher: "He
ho ſpeaks Truth, ſaith he, in matters of no moment, will much
nore ſpeak it in matters of great moment; for he will be ſure at all
mes to abhor a Lie, who abhors it for its own ſake, and as it is a
ie, without any regard to the effects of it." It is, as hath been be-
hinted, very remarkable, that Lying is in Scripture every where
bidden in general terms, without any exception or reſtriction. The
inction of Lies into officious and hurtful, is not new but old; not
invented by modern Writers, but often made uſe of by the Heathen
ralifts. Men always knew, that ſome Lies did good to thoſe to
om they were ſpoken, as well as that others did miſchief: but not-
hſtanding the inſpir'd Writers were well aware of this difference, yet
expreſs'd themſelves in ſuch a manner, as to include all ſorts of
rs. Since therefore the law of God, which is to be our rule, and
the fancy'd reaſon of the thing, about which we may be eaſily miſta-
hath made no exception, I cannot ſee what authority thoſe, who
to take the law as they find it, and *neither* to *add to it, nor diminiſh* Deut. 4. 2.
it, can pretend for reſtraining thoſe prohibitions to ſome kinds of
ng, which in holy Writ are extended to all. It is farther obſerva-
that thoſe evil effects which flow from pernicious Lies, ſuch as de-
ding our neighbour, and robbing him of his good name, and the
are, as ſuch, forbidden in Scripture: ſo that if ſpeaking of Lies
unlawful only on account of theſe evil effects of it, there would
o need of any expreſs commands againſt it under the name of Ly-
ſince theſe evil effects are ſufficiently guarded againſt by other pre-
ts. If to lie is an action in it ſelf indifferent, and is no other ways
than by reaſon of the injuſtice, the malice, the fraud, the detraction,
uncharitableneſs, or other ſins, which go along with it, it would
ufficient that ſuch ſins were ſtrictly forbidden in holy Writ. But,
nce comes it to paſs, that when God hath condemn'd all ſuch ſins,
doth over and above this in abſolute terms condemn Lying, but
Lying is in it ſelf criminal, and hath a peculiar guilt of its own,
inct from the ſtain of thoſe other ſins, which do ſometimes accom-
y it?

LET us therefore take our notions of this ſin, not from the opinions
deceiving and deceivable men, but from the oracles of God; let us
gently conſider, and frequently call to our minds, and cloſely preſs
me on our conſciences, thoſe unlimited declarations againſt Lying,
ich we meet with in diverſe places of holy Writ; let us reflect on
firſt author and origin of Lying, that it derives its birth from the
il, who is a Liar, and the father of it; and let us conſider whither Joh. 8. 44.
will carry us, as well as whence it comes: from hell it firſt ſprung,
to hell it ſhall return; for with *the fearful and unbelieving*, with Rev. 21. 8.
abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, with *ſorcerers, and*
laters, all Liars ſhall have their part in the lake which burneth with
and brimſtone.

LET us conſider how deteſtable this ſin of Lying is in the ſight both
God and man; God hath ſufficiently declar'd his hatred of it by the
outh of his Prophets, who have taught us that *lying lips are an abo-* Prov. 12. 22.
nation to the Lord; and men do more than ſufficiently expreſs their
horrence of it by the keen reſentments they ſhew againſt ſuch, as do

at any time but ſeem to charge them with ſo abject, ſo vile, ſo ſc dalous a thing, as Lying is by all civiliz'd, and ingenuous, and well-b perſons own'd to be: let us weigh in our minds the great miſchief th is done even by thoſe Lies, which ſeem to be moſt innocent, and whi moſt plauſibly plead for allowance; by a frequent and habitual ind gence of our ſelves even in thoſe, we ſhall by degrees wear off that ve rable regard we ought to have for Truth, and that averſion we oug to have to a Lie; we ſhall hazard the loſs of that reputation for in grity, and downright honeſty, which alone can make us ſerviceable our generations.

If Lying be once avow'd as in it ſelf lawful, and only by reaſon ſome accidental circumſtances be deem'd criminal, there will ſoon be end of that mutual truſt, which is neceſſary for the maintenance of ciety: if ſome exceptions are admitted to the general prohibitions Lying, others will be quickly ſtarted, and will equally claim admittanc and ſo at laſt thoſe fences, which God in his Law hath made agai this enormous ſin, will be quite broke down. Let us not vainly ho that we ſhall be able to clear our ſelves from the guilt of this ſin pleading the commonneſs of it; it will not juſtifie us at the laſt day urge, that the generality of men hath been as peccant as we, whilſt help to make up that greater number of tranſgreſſors. Let us, as ought, make a great difference between ſuch Lies as are plainly inj rious to our neighbour, and ſuch as do not appear to do our neighbo any the leaſt wrong; but let us not eſteem this difference ſo great, to render any ſort of Lying wholly innocent, becauſe all ſorts are n equally criminal.

Let ſuch perſons eſpecially think of thoſe expreſs prohibitions Lying, and thoſe ſevere judgments denounc'd againſt Liars, which oc cur frequently in holy Scripture, who without any remorſe allow the ſelves in a conſtant, habitual, uninterrrupted practice of wilful, deli berate, and injurious Lies; who either maliciouſly invent, or induſtrio ly ſpread, Lies tending to the defamation of the innocent, to the fo menting of endleſs diviſions, to the keeping open thoſe wounds, whi every true lover of his country would pour in balm to heal; and to widening thoſe breaches, thro' which the common enemy may enter.

Let thoſe men be afraid of the torments prepar'd for Liars, who matters of traffick and commerce have no regard to the laws of Tru but think themſelves good managers, and ſhrewd men of buſineſs, they can make any the leaſt gain to themſelves at ſo cheap a rate, that of telling a few, or if there be occaſion, not a few Lies. It Ecclus. 27. 2. wiſe obſervation of the Son of *Sirach*, that *as a nail ſticketh faſt tween the joynings of the ſtones, ſo doth ſin ſtick faſt between buy and ſelling*: no ſin certainly ſticketh ſo cloſe to it, as that of Ly thoſe who make the law of God the rule of their actions in other thi ſeem to have no regard to its ſanctions in this: thoſe who freque ly ſurvey their paſt lives, yet ſeldom condemn themſelves for th breaches of God's repeated commandments; theſe are either look'd on as wholly indifferent, or at leaſt are numbred amongſt ſuch failin which will eaſily be forgiven upon a general repentance, without particular acknowledgment of them, or ſorrow for them, or with any reſolutions to abſtain from them for the time to come; and tho the diſtinction of ſins into venial and mortal is condemn'd as *Popiſh*, it is plain in fact, that many *Proteſtants* look upon theſe violations

th

rules of of the Goſpel, as no ways hazarding their eternal ſalva-
n.

BUT *we, brethren, have not ſo learned Chriſt*: we are here taught
the Apoſtle, that Lying is one of thoſe ſins, which is to be put away,
ore we can have put off the old man, and that we muſt ſpeak Truth
h our neighbours, if we would be reckon'd amongſt thoſe, who have
on the new man: for when the Apoſtle hath firſt laid down this ge-
l doctrine, that thoſe who *have heard Chriſt, and have been taught*
im, ought to put off concerning their former converſation the old man,
ich is corrupt according to the deceitful luſts; and to put on the new
, which after God is created in righteouſneſs, and true holineſs; the
cluſion he draws from theſe premiſes, and the particular applica-
he makes of this general precept, is this of my text: *wherefore*
uſe ye are no longer Heathens, but Chriſtians; no longer aliens
n the Goſpel, but the diſciples of Chriſt; becauſe ye profeſs to have
off the old man, and to have put on the new man, in order to
e the ſincerity of this your profeſſion, *putting away Lying, ſpeak*
y man Truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of ano-
We are members one of another, as we are fellow-Chriſtians, and
re ſtill more nearly united to each other, as we are fellow-Proteſtants.

E do * this day commemorate a great and miraculous deliverance
n the wicked machinations of *Popiſh* treachery, and *Popiſh* cruelty.
his happy deliverance we owe the preſervation of God's pure, holy,
undefil'd Religion; and this Religion therefore we ought to adorn
e purity of our lives, and the uprightneſs, ſimplicity, and integri-
f our converſations. Were we members of a corrupted and an adul-
ted Church, a Church which teaches falſe doctrines contrary to the
th of the Goſpel, which ſupports thoſe doctrines by fallacious argu-
nts, by forg'd miracles, by lying legends, we might think it not in-
ſiſtent with our profeſſion to indulge our ſelves in falſe-ſpeaking. *Po-*
y, as ſuch, is one large complicated Lie; its additional articles, which
ath annext to the Apoſtle's Creed, without any ground from Scri-
re, againſt the expreſs doctrine of Scripture, are ſo many downright
s: to ſay of any one man that he is infallible, when the holy Ghoſt
th ſaid of all men that they are Liars, is to affirm what is falſe, and
make falſhood current by giving it the ſtamp of infallible Truth:
nſubſtantiation is a palpable contradiction, nay it includes in it ma-
direct contradictions, that is, in other words, many notorious Lies.
ould we examine its ſeveral tenets one by one, and compare them
h the written Word of God, the only teſt of ſupernatural Truth, we
uld find them all falſe and erroneous; and we have no great reaſon
be ſurpris'd, if falſhood hath all along been endeavour'd to be ſup-
ted by falſhood, and deceitful arts us'd to propagate deceit.

HENCE it comes to paſs that none have been ſo indulgent to offi-
us Lies, as the Caſuiſts of the Church of *Rome*: Lying for the good
Holy Church is ſo far from being accounted ſinful, that it is rather
g'd meritorious. But then it is to be conſider'd, that thoſe who have
ow'd of officious Lies, have been as liberal in the allowance of officious
aſons, officious murders, and officious maſſacres: the goodneſs of the
l hath ſanctified the means; and thoſe things which in themſelves are
ked and damnable, being intended to promote the catholick cauſe,
ome, not only innocent, but even commendable; and are ſo far from
volving the agents in guilt, that they entitle them to canonization.

* The fifth of *Novemb.*

Be the evil of rebellion never ſo great; be it never ſo heinous a crim to conſpire the ruin of our native country; be it never ſo complicated villainy, by one fatal blow, to involve princes, nobles, and people in th ſame common ruin, and to deſtroy even thoſe who are confeſs'd to innocent together with them, whom the conſpirators without autho ty take upon them to condemn and execute as nocent; yet the prop gation of the *Roman* faith, the advancement of the catholick cauſe, restitution of the *Papal* juriſdiction, was the greateſt good imaginab to which the ruin of the nocent or the innocent, of hereticks, or ev of catholicks, could bear no proportion.

FROM a conſpiracy ſo deeply laid, threatning ſuch entire deſtructi to our liberties, to our laws, to our government, to our Church, every thing which ought to be dear and valuable to us, and brought near to execution, God of his infinite mercy deliver'd our fore-fathers, hath convey'd down to us all thoſe bleſſings, which this day's deliveranc firſt ſecur'd. If therefore we would expreſs our thanks to God for theſe his ſignal mercies in the moſt proper and becoming manner; if we woul ſhew, that we ſet a due value on the bleſſings we this day commem rate; let us take care, that as the religion which is continu'd to us holy and pure, ſo our lives and converſations be ſuitable thereto and that as our worſhip is purg'd from ſuperſtition, and our doctrin 2 Cor. 7. 1. from error, ſo we *cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh an ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.* Let us conſider, *what we ſhall render unto the Lord for all the benefits that he hath* done unto *us*; and ſince one of thoſe benefits is reſtoring to us *the cup* of bleſſing of which our anceſtors were by the oppreſſion of the Church of Rom Psal 116. 13. injuriouſly depriv'd, let us in gratitude *take this cup of ſalvation*, an *call upon the name of the Lord*; let us *pay our vows unto the Lord* no *in the preſence of all his people*; *in the courts of the Lord's houſe*, at the feet of his holy altar, let us fall down, and *praiſe the Lord.*

SERMON XXVI.

PREACH'D BEFORE
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE
LORD MAYOR, &c.

HEB. XIII. 16.

do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with ſuch ſacrifices God is well pleaſed.

THE Author of this Epiſtle, having treated at large of the Legal ſacrifices preſcrib'd by the Law of *Moſes*, and having prov'd that they were typical in their firſt deſign, prefigurative of the death of Chriſt, and conſequently to ceaſe after he had *put away ſin by the ſacrifice of him-* f, doth here, in the cloſe of his diſcourſe, intimate to the *Hebrews*, t tho' carnal ſacrifices were now aboliſh'd, yet there were others of piritual kind, which were ſtill in force under the Goſpel, and were be of perpetual obligation.

THANKSGIVING to God for the benefits receiv'd from him, and eficence to our brethren in communicating to them a due propor- n of thoſe good things, which are by God's providence diſpens'd to were, even under the Law, of ſuperior obligation to the ſacrifices uir'd by it: for theſe receiv'd all their value from poſitive inſtitu- n; but thoſe were in their own nature proper for God to exact, and men to perform. Sacrifices were only acceptable, when accompa- d with the love of God and men; but when ſeparated from theſe, y were of no worth in the eſtimation of him, who, in the appoint- nt of them, could propoſe no other end than his own honour, and benefit of mankind.

THAT thankſgiving was the principal thing intended by the euch riſtical ſacrifices under the Law, we are plainly inſtructed in that paſſi nate expoſtulation of God with his people, which we find in the ſo Pſalm, *Hear, O my people, and I will ſpeak, O Iſrael, aud I will* *ſtifie againſt thee; I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove th for thy ſacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually bef me. Will I eat the fleſh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* Off *unto God thankſgiving, and pay thy vows unto the moſt High.* Than giving therefore being the principal aim of ſuch ſacrifices under t Legal œconomy, was not ſuperſeded by the abrogation of them, b was to remain of equal force under the Goſpel-diſpenſation. The crifice of praiſe was, before the eſtabliſhment of the law, and do after the diſannulling of it, continue to be, an indiſpenſable duty: th the fruits of our land, and of our cattle, are now no longer to be brough to the altar; yet we are taught by the Apoſtle, in the verſe before my text, ſtill *to offer the ſacrifice of praiſe to God continually, that* is, the *fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.* And ſo likewiſe as to acts charity, even whilſt the Law was in its full vigor, God had ſolemn Matt. 9. 13. declar'd, *that he would have mercy, and not ſacrifice*; that is, not crifice alone without mercy; but, if they muſt be ſeparated, mercy contradiſtinction to ſacrifice; and where they were joyn'd, principall mercy, as in its nature, dignity, and uſe preferable to ſacrifice. At th ſacrifical feaſts of the *Jews* the poor, the fatherleſs, and the widow were entertain'd out of thoſe offerings which were brought unto the altar Now tho' theſe oblations ceas'd, yet the Apoſtle warns the *Hebrews* that this charitable relief of the poor was not to be intermitted: Go was pleas'd that thoſe gifts, which were formerly offer'd to him who did not want them, ſhould now be beſtow'd on thoſe who moſt needed them; and he vouchſaf'd to recede from his own right, that he migh transfer that right on the poor and neceſſitous. Since therefore God had graciouſly releas'd unto the believing *Hebrews*, what he before claim'd from their fore-fathers, as due unto himſelf; they might now afford larger proportion of charity to their poor brethren: what ſhould hence forward be given unto theſe, God would look upon as paid unto himſelf; and alms-giving alone, without ſacrifice, ſhould now be accep by him in the place both of alms and of ſacrifice.

To do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with ſuch ſacrifi God is well pleaſed.

IN which words there are two things which deſerve our conſid ration.

I. A DUTY commanded in the former part of the verſe, that *to d good, and to communicate, we ſhould not forget.*

II. A MOTIVE propos'd to enforce the practice of this duty in th latter part of the verſe; *for with ſuch ſacrifices God is well pleas*

OF our *forgetting to do good, and to communicate*, there is the le danger, becauſe this duty hath, upon the return of theſe pious ſolemn ties, been ſo often inculcated, that it cannot but be deeply imprint on our memories. The nature and properties of charity; the roo from which it ought to ſpring; the branches, into which it ought to ſpread it ſelf; the fruits, which it ought to bear; the height, to which it ought to riſe; the obligations we are under, as we are men, and re Chriſtians, to a conſtant and cheerful performance of this duty, e, upon ſuch occaſions as theſe, been ſet forth with ſuch variety of oning, ſuch ſtrength of argument, and ſuch perſwaſive eloquence, it would be ſuperfluous to inſiſt upon a ſubject ſo throughly hand- and ſo perfectly underſtood. But for the better quickning of you e conſcientious practice of a duty ſo well known in theory, I ſhall ine the force of that motive, which the Apoſtle here makes uſe o excite in us a conſtant readineſs *to do good, and to communicate*; uſe *with ſuch ſacrifices God is well pleas'd.* In purſuance of which ll ſhew,

WHAT analogy there is betwixt acts of charity and ſacrifices.

IN what ſenſe God is ſaid *with ſuch ſacrifices to be well pleas'd.*

ND then in the cloſe, I ſhall apply what ſhall have been deliver'd e occaſion of this preſent ſolemnity.

rſt I AM to ſhew, what analogy there is betwixt acts of charity ſacrifices.

OING *good and communicating* would not be term'd *ſacrifices well- ſing to God,* as they are here by our Apoſtle, unleſs there was ſome eſs between acts of charity and Legal ſacrifices; and unleſs theſe in thing differ'd from proper and literal ſacrifices, they would not be, ey in Scripture ſometimes are, compar'd to them, and preferr'd re them. Acts of beneficence therefore, and ſacrifices muſt be ſo like; alms given to the poor, and incenſe offer'd to God, muſt have congruity one with the other, as to juſtifie their being both call'd e ſame common name; and at the ſame time, they muſt be ſo far rent and diſtinguiſhable, as that ſome things may be ſaid of the one, ch do not at all belong to the other. Acts of charity towards the or are not ſacrifices in the ſtrict, and literal, and proper ſenſe of word; but they are oblations in a larger, figurative, and more re- e ſenſe: they ſo far differ from oblations, that, when they are call'd ings, or ſacrifices, it muſt be own'd, that this is not their proper, a borrow'd name; and yet they are ſo far like to them, that this e is not abus'd, nor its meaning perverted, when it is apply'd, as here by the Apoſtle, to acts of charity and beneficence.

HE word *ſacrifice* is not ſo far appropriated to carnal victims and lations by the inſpir'd Writers, but that even in the Old Teſtament, ring the *Moſaical* diſpenſation, we obſerve this word us'd in a more n'd and ſpiritual ſenſe. In the ſame Pſalm, wherein *burnt-offerings,* oblations, and the *offering of young bullocks upon the altar,* are call'd Pſal. 51. 19. *ſacrifices of righteouſneſs, a troubled ſpirit* is alſo ſaid to be *the ſa-* v. 17. *fice of God*; and we find this appellation apply'd by the Prophets to yer, and to thankſgiving, as well as to the bloody ſacrifices of the al- So that the word *ſacrifice,* in the largeſt and moſt extenſive ſenſe it, plainly took in all thoſe religious actions, which the ſervants of d were bound to perform by his command, in his worſhip, and to glory. True it is, that even this larger ſenſe of the word, which quently occurs in the Old Teſtament, will not take in acts of chari- ; which are not offer'd, ſtrictly ſpeaking, to God, but beſtow'd upon en; are no parts of the worſhip due to the common Father of us all, t a branch of that duty we owe to our brethren; and do not ſo pro- rly belong to the precepts of the firſt, as of the ſecond table: ſo that is no wonder, if in the writings of the Old Teſtament we no where d acts of charity towards the poor call'd, as they are here by St. *Paul,* lations, or ſacrifices. But under the Goſpel, where our Saviour, w *is God above all, bleſſed for ever*, hath declar'd all acts of charity d *by us to the leaſt of our brethren, as done unto himſelf*; ſuch chari ble actions being intended by Chriſtians to promote the glory of G being perform'd by us as a ſervice acceptable and well-pleaſing to hi being done for his ſake, at his inſtance, and to his honour; and bei in the gracious conſtruction of our Saviour, done, not ſo much u men, as unto Chriſt himſelf, who is God as well as man; may, in th regards, and upon theſe accounts, very properly be ſtyl'd ſacrifices

But if we enquire farther into the nature of ſacrifices, and into t ends for which they were appointed; we ſhall ſtill find more lines reſemblance between theſe and acts of charity. One great end of crifices was, that thoſe who offer'd them ſhould by ſuch oblations ſig fie, that they acknowledg'd God to be the ſovereign Creator and D poſer of all things: by conſecrating to him part of their ſubſtance, th profeſs'd that they ow'd all to his bounty, and paid him back a port of what they enjoy'd, as an acknowledgment, that they receiv'd the whole from his overflowing goodneſs and plenitude. How ſmall ſo ver this acknowledgment was, and how little ſoever valuable for i own intrinſick worth; yet it had ſo far the nature of a quit-rent, th it was exacted from them, and paid by them, as a proof of their de pendence; and that they were not proprietors of what they poſſeſt, bu tenants, who held of him, to whom, as to their chief Lord, they paid this homage and ſervice. Hence was it that God requir'd the *firſt-fruits* of the earth to be offer'd to him, that the offerer might thereby declare, that tho' he *water'd* and *planted*, yet it was *God* alone that *gave the increaſe*, and God who was the owner of the ſoil. So alſo the firſt-born of all cattle, as well as of men, was to be ſanctified unto God; and of theſe ſome to be actually ſacrific'd, others to be redeem'd at a ſet price, Pſal. 127. 3. to expreſs by this ſolemn oblation, that *children, and the fruit of the womb were an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord*; and that whether he demanded *a bullock out of the houſe, or an he-goat out of the folds*, He ask'd nothing but what was by antecedent right his own; ſince Pſal. 50. 10. *every beaſt of the foreſt is* his, *and the cattle upon a thouſand hills*; the Pſal. 24. 1. *earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof, the world, and they tha dwell therein.*

Now if this was the principal thing ſignified by the oblation of ſa-crifices, that God is the ſovereign proprietor and diſpoſer of all things; that we ought with part of our riches to acknowledge his ſupreme dominion, from whoſe gift and bounty we derive the whole; then acts of charity to the poor and needy will, in this reſpect, have a near relation to ſacrifices, and are, by our Apoſtle, upon good grounds, ſtyl'd ſuch in the text; ſince by our readineſs to part with ſome ſhare of our worldly goods to the poor, whom God hath made his proxies and ſubſtitutes, to receive at our hands what is due to him, we do give *honour to him to whom honour belongeth*; we *render unto God the things that are God's*; we repay him a ſmall part of that abundance wherewith he hath enrich'd us: and by diſpenſing our riches to thoſe whom he has commiſſion'd to be his receivers, we plainly ſhew, that we do not look upon them to be ſo properly our own, as his; as being not the purchaſe of our own induſtry, but the fruits of his mercy; not owing to fortune and chance, but to his bleſſing and providence: in grateful acknowledgment of which, we pay a kind of continual tribute out of them;

vell remembring, under whom we hold; and that what we poſſeſs,
ot our own abſolute, free, and unburden'd inheritance, but a li-
ed, and dependent tenure, held upon certain covenants and condi-
s, and ſubject to ſuch burdens and payments, as our ſovereign Lord
been pleas'd, in the firſt donation, to reſerve to himſelf out of it.

NOTHER end of ſacrifices was, that thoſe who offer'd them, might,
onſecrating to God ſome ſome ſmall portion of their ſubſtance, de-
from him a bleſſing on the reſt. As they ow'd whatever they en-
to his free gift and bounty, who at firſt liberally beſtow'd it on them;
ey ow'd alſo the continued and quiet poſſeſſion of it to his provi-
nce, who ſecur'd it to them: they held of him as their chief Lord,
therefore paid homage to him on account of his dominion; and
were quieted in this their tenure by his protection, and therefore
tribute to him, as the maintainer and preſerver of thoſe rights,
h they had at firſt deriv'd from him. God, as a ſovereign Lord,
had the propriety of the whole, was pleas'd to accept of a part, as
cknowledgment of his right to their entire poſſeſſions: but, tho'
was a debt, which was ſtrictly due to him; nay, tho' it was accepted
ay of compoſition, in lieu of a much larger, which he might juſt-
ve demanded; tho', upon both theſe accounts, it was ſo far from
g an obligation upon him to make any returns, that the very ac-
nce of it laid a new obligation upon them, at whoſe hands he ac-
d it; yet he was pleas'd, in his great bounty, to recompenſe their
ent of what they ow'd him, by making them farther and larger
s: he took care that their poſſeſſions ſhould not be leſſen'd, but au-
ted by what they paid to him; what by oblations offer'd unto God
were requir'd to expend, that was abundantly made up to them,
he plentiful increaſe with which God was pleas'd to bleſs them. *So-*
therefore preſſes the obſervance of this religious duty of ſacri-
g, from the conſideration of thoſe temporal bleſſings that were ſure
ue from it; *honour the Lord*, ſaith he, *with thy ſubſtance, and with* Prov. 3. 9,10.
firſt-fruits of all thine increaſe; ſo ſhall thy barns be filled with
y, and thy preſſes ſhall burſt out with new wine.

OW if this was another end intended by the ſacrifices of the law,
by offering up to God part of their ſubſtance, they might derive
n themſelves and their families a bleſſing on the remainder; then it
vident, that acts of charity to the poor, have, in this regard alſo, a
farther reſemblance to legal ſacrifices; ſince by thus diſpenſing them,
may ſecure to our ſelves God's bleſſing on all our enjoyments. To
gift we originally owe what we have; to his protection we owe the
ervation of it; to him therefore is an homage due, as our Lord,
a tribute due, as our Protector; and what we pay to him upon
n theſe titles, by the hands of thoſe whom he hath appointed his re-
ers, is ſo far from being an incumbrance on our eſtate, that it is an
antage: for what we poſſeſs is not leſſen'd, but increas'd by this de-
tion; ſince it diſpoſes God to pour down his bleſſings in a more
ntiful manner upon us. For, as to ſacrifices of old, ſo to acts of cha-
alſo, are gracious promiſes of temporal bleſſings made by him, who
ot a man that he ſhould lie; but what he hath ſaid, that he will Num. 23 19.
and what he hath ſpoken that he will make good. Upon this view
Iſraelites were not only commanded to be charitable to the poor
point of duty; but were encourag'd to be ſo in regard to their world-
intereſt: *Thou ſhalt ſurely give unto thy poor brother, and thine heart* Deut. 15.10.

ſhall not be griev'd when thou giveſt unto him; becauſe that for this thi the Lord thy God ſhall bleſs thee in all thy works, and in all that th putteſt thine hand unto. What is thus laid out, is ſure to be repaid wi intereſt; it will turn more to account by being thus diſpers'd, than b being hoarded up, employ'd in the moſt beneficial trade, diſpos'd of i the moſt promiſing adventure, or let out at the higheſt rate of uſury Whatever is thus pour'd out, ſhall quickly be repleniſh'd with freſh ſu plies from that fountain of goodneſs, which is inexhauſtible. He w Iſai. 58. 10, 11. thus *draws out his ſoul to the hungry, ſhall be like a water'd garde and like a ſpring of water, whoſe waters fail not.* Be therefore the e fuſion never ſo great, it ſhall never draw us dry; becauſe as faſt as w pour forth, ſo faſt ſhall our ſtore, by the ſecret and hidden conveyanc of the divine providence, be conſtantly recruited. What the charitab Widow of *Sarepta* experienc'd upon her relieving the prophet *Eli* 1 Kings 17. 16. that *her barrel of meal waſted not, and her cruſe of oil failed* not, bu were repair'd in the ſame meaſure as they were ſpent, and were fed upon without being conſum'd, however miraculous, was not ſo ſingular and extraordinary, but that the charitable perſon hath good ground from Scripture to hope, that what he gives to the poor ſhall, in the li manner, thro' the ſecret working of God's providence, be taken from h heap without leſſening it; nay, ſhall add to its bulk; and that tho loaves which are dealt out to the poor, ſhall, like thoſe that were diſtri buted by our Saviour to his diſciples, be multiply'd and increas'd *by thi* way of conſumption.

I MIGHT go on to purſue the parallel between the ſacrifices of th Law, and acts of charity under the Goſpel ſtill farther, and might poi out to you many other marks, whereby they reſemble each other, beſides thoſe that have been already mention'd. Sacrifices were accepted, not according to the worth of the offering, but according to the ability and good-will of the offerer; the perſon who was not able to bring a lamb, was to bring two turtles, or two young pigeons, which were accepted as well as a greater victim from a richer votary. And our Apoſtle St. *Paul* hath aſſur'd us, that it is the very ſame caſe in the giving 2 Cor. 8. 12. of alms: for *if there be firſt a willing mind, it is accepted according t that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.* God doth no weigh our charity by the quantity of what is given, but by the che fulneſs of the giver: he doth not ſcrupulouſly examine how much i parted with; but graciouſly conſiders, out of how much it is taken and according to our Saviour's calculation, the widow's mite was n only an equal ſum to the greater gifts of thoſe, who were more enabl to give, but *ſhe caſt in more than they all.*

SACRIFICES of old, went along both with the prayers of thoſe w implor'd God's mercies, and with the praiſes of thoſe who offer'd th thankſgivings for mercies receiv'd: whether the people of God dep cated his judgments, a free-will-offering back'd their petitions; or w ther they acknowledg'd his benefits, an euchariſtick-offering went with the ſound of their hallelujahs to the throne of God. And this ſo holds true in acts of charity and giving of alms, which the Saints God have always joyn'd with their prayers, to render them more e fectual for drawing down God's favours; and with their thankſgiving as the moſt proper and ſuitable return for benefits already receiv'd

BUT the main deſign of ſacrifices, and that for which they ſee chiefly to have been intended in the *Moſaick* diſpenſation, was, that th migh

t make an atonement for ſin, and reconcile God unto men, when
heir tranſgreſſions they had provok'd him. For beſides the burnt-
ings, which were offer'd to God, as the Creator and Sovereign of
world; and the peace-offerings, which were offer'd to him, as the
of every good and perfect gift, there were alſo ſin-offerings, and
aſs-offerings, which were offer'd to him as an offended God, in or-
o appeaſe him: the victim ſtood in the place of the votary; what
ſerv'd, that the victim ſuffer'd; and thus for many ſins an atone-
was made, and he, for whom it was made, was forgiven. Now
poſtle may ſeem to allude to this ſpecial kind of ſacrifices, when
ing good and communicating he pronounces, that they are *ſacrifices*
ewith *God is well pleaſed*. How far acts of charity bear an ana-
o theſe propitiatory ſacrifices, in what ſenſe God is here ſaid to be
leaſed with theſe ſacrifices, whether they are of any efficacy to
s reconciling God to us, and appeaſing his wrath, is what we pro-
in the
cond PLACE to enquire.

HEN it is ſaid of acts of charity, that *with ſuch ſacrifices God is well*
d, as is here ſaid by the Apoſtle, and that they are *an odour of a* Phil. 4. 18.
ſmell, a ſacrifice acceptable, well-pleaſing to God, as is elſewhere
y the ſame inſpir'd Writer, thoſe of the *Romiſh* Church think,
he leaſt we can underſtand by theſe expreſſions, is, that by ſuch
ices we merit or deſerve God's favour; we make thereby ſome kind
isfaction for our ſins; and, in virtue thereof, render him propi-
to us. The terms *well-pleaſing* and *acceptable* do not, they own,
mſelves imply ſo much; but they cannot, in their opinion, be
rſtood to ſignifie leſs, when they are joyn'd with ſacrifices, with
h God was delighted, and by which he was aton'd: ſo that if acts
arity are *well-pleaſing to God* now, as ſacrifices were of old; if
are ſubſtituted in the place of thoſe; if the language of the Old
ment, whereby the atoning virtue of ſacrifices was expreſs'd, and
rſtood, is rightly apply'd in the New Teſtament to acts of charity,
they are not only acceptable, ſay they, but propitiatory; they
a right and title to remiſſion of ſins; they have in them the nature
tisfactions, and are properly meritorious.

OW, I think, it muſt be allow'd, that there is more authority, both
the Fathers and from the Scriptures, to aſcribe merit to alms,
to any other good action; and that it is uſual with the writers of
pureſt ages of the Church to attribute to them an healing and ato-
g power; to ſpeak of them in the ſame language, as they do of pro-
atory ſacrifices; and to aſſert, that by them we do deſerve well of
, and reconcile him to us, when by our ſins we have provok'd him.

T is the doctrine of St. *Cyprian*, an ancient Father of the Church,
one, whoſe teſtimony we do often appeal to againſt the errors of
Church of *Rome*; * "That thoſe defilements of ſin, which we con-
act after baptiſm, are by our alms waſh'd away; that as the fire of
ll is extinguiſh'd by the laver of baptiſmal water, ſo the flame of
r ſins is put out by alms and good deeds; and becauſe remiſſion of
ns is but once given in baptiſm, which cannot be repeated, therefore
aily and conſtant doing good, having in it a like efficacy with baptiſm,

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* Sordes poſtmodum (poſt baptiſmum) quaſcunque contrahimus, eleemoſynis abluimus. Sicut la-
o aquæ ſalutaris gehennæ ignis extinguitur, ita eleemoſynis atque operibus juſtis delictorum flamma ſo-
r. Et quia ſemel in baptiſmo remiſſa peccatorum datur, aſſidua & jugis operatio, baptiſmi inſtar imi-

tata,

"doth again procure us God's pardon: that our Saviour, who is m "ciful, preſcribes to us works of mercy; and becauſe he deſires to "thoſe, whom he hath redeem'd at a great price, he inſtructs them, "thoſe, who after baptiſmal grace have been polluted, may again "cleans'd: that remedies for atoning God are appointed in the W "of God; that the divine oracles have inſtructed ſinners what they "to do; that by works of righteouſneſs God is ſatisfy'd; that by the "rits of alms ſins are purg'd.

THESE are the ſtrains of one, who hath been always eſteem'd a p and judicious writer; of one, who mightily adorn'd the Chriſtian ligion by the holineſs of his life, and who dy'd a martyr for the filed faith of Chriſt. His ſoul was poſſeſs'd with an exalted opinion the excellency of this Chriſtian grace; and out of an earneſt deſire kindle in the hearts of his brethren that holy flame, which glow'd warmly within his own breaſt, he might ſuffer expreſſions to fall fr his pen, which might not bear the teſt of a ſevere and rigorous ex mination. For the expreſſions by him us'd are looſe and general; distinction is profeſſedly made betwixt leſſer neglects and failings in duty and thoſe ſins that are groſs and preſumptuous; betwixt the ward principle of charity and the bare outward acts of it; betw charity taken, in its moſt comprehenſive ſenſe, for the love of God man, and that one particular branch of charity, which conſiſts in lieving the poor and needy; betwixt the extraordinary and ordina degrees of charity; betwixt the power of charity to prevail with G for a releaſe from temporal puniſhments, and from eternal death; twixt its being graciouſly accepted of God as a term and condition our pardon, thro' the merits of Chriſt's blood, and its purging away ſins by any proper virtue and efficacy of its own. Such limitations theſe, tho' not expreſs'd by that holy Father, were, without doubt, him intended, and by thoſe, to whom he addreſs'd himſelf, well un derſtood. And I am verily perſwaded, that in that charitable age no ſuſpicions were entertain'd, no ſuggeſtions were ſpread, no exclamation were made, to the prejudice of that excellent preacher; as if, by an un due extolling of this one virtue of charity, he derogated from the wor or neceſſity of other Chriſtian duties; or taught men, that, provid they gave alms, they might be ſecure of ſalvation, without holineſs of life.

THE high encomiums given to charity by this, and by other writ of the firſt ages of the Church, tho' they may ſound harſhly now in t ears of *Proteſtants*, who have juſt reaſon to be jealous of all expreſſio which ſeem to give any countenance to the modern opinions of t Church of *Rome*, concerning the merit of good works, are yet I dou not, in that ſenſe in which they were meant, and with thoſe reſtrictio with which, even when not expreſly guarded, they were well kno to be limited, very agreeable to the language and doctrine of holy W If this matter were to be decided by the authority of apocryphal W ters, there would then be no room to diſpute the ſaving virtue of al Tobit. 12. 9. For we are by them taught, that *alms deliver from death, and* ſ

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tata, Dei rurſus indulgentiam largitur: —— miſericors docet ac monet miſericordiam fieri, & quia ſerva re quærit, quos magno pretio redemit, poſt baptiſmi gratiam ſordidatos monet denuo poſſe purgari. —Re media propitiando Deo, ipſius Dei verbis data ſunt; quid deberent facere peccantes, magiſteria divina do cuerunt; operationibus juſtis Deo ſatisfieri, miſericordiæ meritis peccata purgari. *Cyp. de opere & eleem Tract. p.* 197, 198, 199. *& alibi paſſim.*

purg

rge away all ſin; that *they ſuffer not to come into darkneſs* ----- that c. 4. 10.
ater will quench a flaming fire, and alms maketh an atonement for Ecclus. 3. 30.
s. But, beſides the teſtimony of theſe writers, whoſe authority, tho'
peal'd to in this caſe by the compilers of our own *homilies, as well
by the ancient Fathers of the Church, is not deciſive; what is ſaid
the great price and value, and wonderful efficacy of alms, ſeems ſuf-
iently warranted by thoſe inſpir'd Pen-men, who, we are ſure, wrote
the guidance of the Holy Ghoſt.

THE *covering* and the *pardon* of ſin are, in the language of holy Writ,
ivalent expreſſions: when therefore of charity it is affirm'd by St. Pet. 4. 8.
ter, what is alſo affirm'd of one particular branch of it by St. *James*,
t it ſhall cover the multitude of ſins; when the covering of ſins is James. 5. 20.
ſpecified as an act, or inſtance of charity, but propos'd as a motive
the exerciſe of it; it is eaſie and natural to underſtand the words of
Apoſtle in this plain and obvious ſenſe, that God is pleas'd to re-
many ſins to the charitable on account of their charity.

THAT merciful alms-dealing is profitable to purge the ſoul from the
ction and filthy ſpots of ſin, the compilers of our homilies, follow-
therein the ſenſe of venerable antiquity, do infer from that remark-
ſaying of our Lord; *give alms of ſuch things as you have, and be-* Luke. 11. 41.
all things are clean unto you. The *Phariſees* marvell'd, that he
not firſt waſh'd e're he ſat down to meat: upon this our Saviour
rves, that outward cleanneſs is not ſo much to be regarded as in-
d purity; and then, that they might not be at a loſs how to attain
inward purity, he preſcribes acts of charity, as the moſt proper ca-
ticks, which would cleanſe and purifie them better than all their
hings and luſtrations.

THE wiſe man hath laid it down as a ſure aphoriſm, that *by mercy* Prov. 16. 6.
truth iniquity is purg'd: and this general medicine for the healing
ur ſpiritual diſeaſes is by *Daniel* applied to the particular caſe of *Ne-*
hadnezzar; *Let my counſel be acceptable unto thee, and redeem* Dan. 4. 27.
ſins by alms-giving, for ſo the original, and ſo all the ancient ver-
s run, *and thine iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the poor.* The ſame
olſome remedy, againſt the ſame raging diſtemper, had been before
ſcrib'd to the people of *Iſrael* by the Prophet *Iſaiah*: they were *a* Iſai. 1. 4.
ful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a ſeed of evil doers; *children*
t were corrupters; *that had forſaken the Lord*; *that had provok'd*
Holy one of Iſrael to anger. In ſuch a deſperate ſtate as this the
rifices of the Law were of no efficacy to expiate their guilt; even
pentance it ſelf, without works of charity, was not ſufficient to pro-
re the pardon of their ſins, and to reſtore them to the favour of God:
t if, after *ceaſing to do evil, and learning to do well, they would* alſo v. 17.
lieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, and plead for the widows,
en, tho' their ſins were as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow, tho' v. 18.
y were red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wooll.

THAT in the ſtrict, and now generally receiv'd ſenſe of the word,
her our alms, or any other good works of ours do merit God's fa-
ur; that there is any equality betwixt the alms we give, and the mer-
s we expect from God; ſo that the former ſhould be the price, where-
the latter are to be purchas'd; that God's juſtice would be impeach'd,
he did not recompenſe our alms in that manner, in which we are aſ-

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* Serm. of Alms-deeds. part 2.

ſur'd from his Word he will recompenſe them; that the alms-giver i
worthy of eternal life, as the labourer is worthy of his hire; that the
is any equivalence or parity of worth betwixt the good we do to ou
brother, and the good we hope for from God; that God, who is w
pleaſed with our alms, is any ways better'd or oblig'd by them; th
thoſe, who in their lives, or at their deaths, are liberal in the givi
of alms, ſhall obtain eternal life, or ſhall eſcape eternal death, tho' th
live in the habitual practice of any groſs ſin, and die without repentanc
that no other enquiry will be made at the day of judgment, but wh
ther we have reliev'd the poor, or not; and that our final ſtate will
determin'd according to the anſwer we make to that ſingle enquir
theſe, I ſay, are tenets, which all good *Proteſtants* do, upon juſt groun
deny and abhor, and which the moderateſt of the *Romaniſts* will n
venture to affirm.

BUT then, on the other ſide, that alms are made a neceſſary con
tion of our receiving the bleſſings of God; that upon our due perfor-
mance of this condition, God will make good his promiſes; that God
hath bound himſelf to reward our alms, and that he cannot, or rather
that he will not, depart from his Word; that every one ſhall receive
reward according to his *labour of love*, not a reward barely equal to hi
love, but proportionable to it, that is, a greater reward for a greate
charity, and a leſs reward for a leſs; but ſtill ſuch a reward, as, eve
when leaſt, is greater than his charity, when greateſt; that our alms
whether they deſerve or not, will procure for us, God's mercies, and
give us ſuch a title to the divine favour, as, whether of right it ca
be over-rul'd or not, will certainly in fact not be over-rul'd; that at th
day of judgment a very particular and diſtinguiſhing regard will b
had to our acts of charity; that, for the ſake of them, many ſins o
ſurprize and infirmity ſhall be graciouſly overlook'd, in thoſe who a
plac'd on Chriſt's right hand; and that even thoſe, who are ſet on hi
left hand, if they have been charitable, ſhall be condemn'd to more to-
lerable puniſhments, than if to their other ſins they had added that o
unmercifulneſs; theſe, I ſay, are doctrines, which thoſe who are mo
oppoſite to *Popery* need not, which thoſe who have a due regard to th
holy Scriptures, and to that ſenſe in which they have been underſto
by the earlieſt writers cannot, and which thoſe of our own commu
do not, deny.

TO the enquiry therefore how far doing good and communicati
are ſacrifices pleaſing to God, and what efficacy they have towards atoni
him, this in ſhort ſeems to be the true anſwer; that altho' acts of ch
rity cannot give us a rightful claim to the promiſes of God, and to th
pardon of our ſins, excluſively of other duties; yet that ſuch liberal pr
miſes are no where in the Goſpel made to any other ſingle duty, as a
to charity: that altho' our ſins ſhall not be remitted to us for our ch
rity without repentance; yet acts of charity when join'd with repe
tance are of great uſe to render it effectual for procuring forgivenes
that, altho' Chriſt our Saviour is our only proper propitiatory ſacrifi
for whoſe ſake alone our ſins will be pardoned; yet acts of chari
perform'd to our brethren for the ſake of Chriſt have, thro' the all-ſu
cient merits of Chriſt's blood, a ſubordinate efficacy towards procuri
God's grace and favour, and are in that reſpect *ſacrifices with wh*
God is well pleaſed.

PROCEED now, in the laſt place, to apply what has been deli-
d to the occaſion of this preſent ſolemnity.

NDER the Old Teſtament ſacrifices were offer'd as well by commu-
s of men, as by private perſons, and were appointed by God as pro-
neans to procure national bleſſings, and to remove national judg-
ts. And that we of this kingdom and city do not groan under thoſe
nities, which our ſins have deſerv'd; that we are ſtill permitted to
thoſe numerous and ſignal bleſſings, which by our repeated tranſ-
ons we have juſtly forfeited, is, next to the infinite goodneſs of
principally owing to thoſe Goſpel-ſacrifices *of doing good and*
nunicating, which have now for many years in the hoſpitals of this
as in ſo many temples of charity, been offer'd up to the honour
e Almighty.

REPORT of the charities of this laſt year will now be read unto you.

Here the report was read.

HESE are the ſeveral ſorts of oblations, which by the piety of de-
and charitable ſouls have been preſented; the ſacrifices, which we
rneſtly beſeech and exhort you may, with the ſame ardent zeal,
in an equal, or rather exceeding meaſure, be ſtill offer'd unto God,
ing *odours of a ſweet ſmell, ſacrifices* which we know to be *ac-*
ble, and well-pleaſing unto him. A father of the fatherleſs is God Pſal. 68 5.
holy habitation; and therefore cannot but with pleaſure look down
thoſe, who do here upon earth imitate him by a tender and pa-
l care of the fatherleſs and orphans. It is the character of God's
d Son, in whom he is well pleas'd, that he *went about doing good*; Acts 10. 38.
e *heal'd the ſick people, that were taken with diverſe diſeaſes,* Matt. 4. 24.
torments, and thoſe which were lunatick; that by him *the lame* c. 11. v. 5.
made to walk, and the poor had the Goſpel preach'd unto them.
n therefore we follow our Saviour's ſteps; when we gladly em-
all the opportunities of *doing good* that are offer'd us, and are di-
t in ſeeking out ſuch opportunities, when they do not offer them-
s; when by our charity health is diſpens'd to the ſick, ſoundneſs
dy is reſtor'd to the maim'd, and ſoundneſs of mind to the diſtract-
when at our expence children are inſtructed in the ſaving truths
e Goſpel, and *nurtur'd in the fear and admonition of the Lord*;
do by theſe acts of mercy and goodneſs approve our ſelves the
dren of God, and may be as well aſſur'd, as if we heard it by a voice
heaven, that in us alſo, as being thro' the grace of adoption his
, *God is well pleas'd.*

T is an ordinance of God, that *if any man will not work, neither* 2 Theſſ. 3. 10.
l he eat: it is the rule of the Goſpel, that *he who hath ſtole, ſhall* Epheſ. 4. 28.
l no more; *but labour, working with his hands the thing which is*
l, that he may give to him that needeth: a *rod for the fool's back,* is
diſcipline, which the laws of God, as well as of men, do appoint
the correction of evil-doers. When therefore, by the care of wiſe
good Magiſtrates, idle vagabonds are compell'd to earn their own
ad with the ſweat of their brows; when felons are by cloſe confine-
nt reſtrain'd from purſuing their former courſes of theft and rapine,
neceſſitated by hard labour both to provide for themſelves, and to
ntribute to the maintenance of thoſe poor who are willing, but not
e, to work; when lewd and profligate perſons, on whom reaſon and
ligion have no hold, are by the wholſome diſcipline of corporal

punishments charitably reclaim'd; theſe acts of juſtice, temper'd
mercy, are agreeable to God's reveal'd Will, and do mightily redo
to the honour of his Name; and with theſe therefore an holy
righteous God cannot but be delighted.

To Magiſtrates is delegated the authority of God; to them in
Writ is ſometimes aſcrib'd the very name of God: but they are
more God-like, the image of the God-head doth never ſhine forth
them with greater luſtre, than when out of their fulneſs ſtreams of b
ty do iſſue forth for refreſhing the poor and needy, and by the em
tions of their goodneſs, concurring with providence, men are ſuppo
in their life and being. For as to do good without any poſſibility o
ceiving good, is the incommunicable prerogative of God; ſo to do
to thoſe, from whom we have no proſpect of a return, is that w
makes the neareſt approaches towards the divine all-ſufficiency.

Of the *Roman* ſenators we read, that when their city was ſtor
by a barbarous nation, they, array'd in their purple, and plac'd
their chairs of ſtate, appear'd with ſuch awful majeſty, that they
even by their enemies look'd upon, and reverenc'd, as Gods: but
veneration was ſoon abated; they were quickly diſcover'd to be
tal, and by the brutal fury of their enemies they died like men.
Chriſtian Magiſtrates charity adds a greater ornament, than all the
Job. 29. 12, 13, 14. ſigns of dignity and robes of ſtate: when they, with holy *Job*, de
ver the poor that cry, and the fatherleſs, and him that hath none
help him: when *the bleſſing of him that is ready to periſh comes upo*
them, and they cauſe the widow's heart to ſing for joy: when they p
on righteouſneſs, and it cloaths them, and mercy and charity *are*
them as a robe and a diadem; there is then ſomething in them, that
truly majeſtick and divine; ſomething which will ſtrike the eyes of
beholders with a deep and laſting veneration; ſomething that will re
der them truly immortal; and which, by entitling them to the divin
protection, will beſt ſecure both them, and the city over which the
preſide, from all hoſtile attempts, and from the invaſion of the *Gauls*.

In the midſt therefore of our other preparations for war, let us no
Ecclus. 29. 12, 13. forget *to lay up our alms in our ſtore-houſes*: *for this ſhall deliver*
from all afflictions; *it ſhall fight for us againſt our enemies, better th*
a mighty ſhield, or ſtrong ſpear. In the day of battle ſuch a com
band of well-nurtur'd children, as we here ſee, bred up in the fear o
God, and daily employ'd in praying for their benefactors, and for th
peace and proſperity of our eſtabliſh'd Church and Government, wi
by procuring the bleſſings of God upon our nation, prove as ſtrong
guard againſt the power of our enemies, as the beſt diſciplin'd army
grown men expert in war.

The Heathens, when upon any great enterprize they would rend
their Gods propitious, had recourſe to ſome ancient books, ſaid to
ſent from heaven, depoſited with their prieſts, and look'd into wi
great pomp and ceremony, in order to know, what religious rites th
were to uſe by way of atonement. We Chriſtians are ſure, that w
have in our cuſtody the oracles of God given to us from above: the
therefore we have now conſulted, and in theſe we have found direction
how we may propitiate God; what thoſe ſacrifices are, which will pro
Mic. 6. 6. cure his favour, and find a gracious acceptance with him. *Wherew*
then ſhall we come before the Lord, and bow our ſelves before the hi
God? Shall we come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of
year

ar old? In theſe God had no pleaſure, even when they were offer'd the Law; much leſs doth he require them now at our hands under dispenſation of the Goſpel. In this laſt, this fulleſt manifeſtation his will, *he hath ſhew'd us what is good*; *to love mercy is what the rd requires of us*; *to do good and to communicate are the ſacrifices erewith we may hope to pleaſe God*, and to draw down his bleſſings on our perſons, and upon our families; upon our counſels, and up- our enterprizes; upon our nation, and upon our Sovereign; up- the State, and upon the Church; upon our bodies, and upon our ls.

With which bleſſings may God of his infinite mercy enrich us thro' the merits of his bleſſed Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

SER-

SERMON XXVII

Not as pleaſing Men, but GOD.

GAL. I. 10.

The firſt ſermon on this Text.

For if I yet pleas'd Men, I ſhould not be the ſervant of Chriſt

WHAT St. *Paul* here declares doth, at firſt view, a
pear inconſiſtent with thoſe declarations, which h
hath made in other parts of his Epiſtles. He here pu
to himſelf, and to the *Galatians* to whom he writ
this queſtion, *Do I ſeek to pleaſe men*? which word
tho expreſs'd by way of interrogation, do imply a peremptory denial o
his ſeeking to pleaſe men: and then in the words of the text he ſub
joyns a reaſon for this denial; becauſe, *if he yet pleas'd men, he ſhoul*
not be the ſervant of Chriſt. In the beginning of this Epiſtle, he h
v. 1. ſtil'd himſelf *an Apoſtle, not of men, neither by man, but by Je*
Chriſt: being therefore *an Apoſtle, not of men, but of Chriſt*, he w
bound to approve himſelf, not to men, but to Chriſt: Chriſt's ſervan
he was, as being ſent by him, and therefore could do nothing whi
was inconſiſtent with that character: if therefore the pleaſing of m
did any way incapacitate him for being a ſervant of Chriſt, the *Ga*
tians might be aſſur'd he would not renounce the ſervice of Chriſt. B
then 'tis difficult to conceive, why the pleaſing of men ſhould be ſo i
compatible with the ſervice of Chriſt, that to do the one would be
betray the other; ſince 'tis poſſible that men might be pleas'd with h
ſerving Chriſt, and Chriſt be ſerv'd by his pleaſing men. For he, w
here tells the *Galatians* that he did not ſeek to pleaſe men, elſe-whe
adviſes the *Corinthians* againſt doing any thing, that might diſple
any ſort of men: and that we may not think he exhorted them to w
he did not practiſe himſelf, he recommends this advice to them by t
1 Cor. 10. 32, 33. authority of his own example: *Give none offence*, ſaith he, *neither to t*
Jews, *nor to the* Gentiles, *nor to the Church of God*; *even as I ple*
all men in all things. In the words of my text he ſeems to decla
againſt all ſort of endeavour to pleaſe any ſort of men; for he expre

him

elf indefinitely, without any limitation, either to things, or per-
, but in his Epiſtle to the *Corinthians* he affirms univerſally, both
the perſons to be pleas'd, and the matters in which they were to
leas'd, that *he pleas'd all men in all things*. The reaſon which St.
aſſigns here for his not pleaſing men, is his being *the ſervant of*
ſt: were he the ſervant of men, he might ſeek to pleaſe men, but
the ſervant of Chriſt, his only care was to pleaſe his proper Lord
Maſter. But it is obſervable, that he declares to the *Corinthians*,
tho' he was *free from all men*, yet *he made himſelf a ſervant* 1 Cor. 9. 19.
all. Now if his being a ſervant of Chriſt was a reaſon why he
ld ſeek to pleaſe Chriſt, then his being a ſervant of all men was a
n why he ſhould ſeek to pleaſe all men: If his being a ſervant of
was not inconſiſtent with his being a ſervant of Chriſt, then nei-
could his pleaſing of men, which was an expreſſion of that ſervice
oluntarily paid to men, be inconſiſtent with his ſerving Chriſt: at
it is plain, that the Apoſtle did not think the pleaſing of the one,
the ſervice of the other, incompatible, when he wrote to the *Co-*
thians; for he ſtiles himſelf to them, as well as to the *Galatians*, *an*
oſtle, or ſervant, *of Jeſus Chriſt*: and he very well knew himſelf,
he taught them, that he was not his own maſter, much leſs a ſer-
to other men, *being bought with a price*, and therefore a ſervant
m who laid down that price. What ſhall we ſay then? Doth St.
overthrow in one part of his writings what he eſtabliſhes in ano-
? Doth he, who declares to the *Galatians*, that *if he built again the* Galat. 2. 18.
s which he deſtroy'd, he ſhould make himſelf a tranſgreſſor; doth
I ſay, elſe-where deſtroy that doctrine, which he hath here built?
hen he tells the *Galatians*, that *he doth not ſeek to pleaſe men*, and
ms to the *Corinthians*, that *he pleaſeth all men in all things*, doth
o ſpeak in his own language, *uſe lightneſs*? *or the things that he* 2 Cor. 1. 17.
poſeth, doth he purpoſe according to the fleſh, that with him there
ld be yea, yea, and nay, nay? What then becomes of his ſolemn
eſſion, that *as God is true, his word is not yea, and nay*? v. 18.
order to clear theſe ſeeming difficulties, that we may at the ſame
underſtand St. *Paul's* conduct, and regulate our own; that we
form right notions of this matter, and be able to know how far we
, or may not aim at pleaſing men; it may be of uſe to us to enquire
n, and in what caſes, an endeavour to pleaſe men is innocent, when
a ſin, and when it is a duty. What is neceſſary to be ſaid on this
ect will, I think, be fairly included under theſe three heads:

. WHATEVER men may innocently be pleas'd with, that we may
innocently do, in order to pleaſe men.
I. WHAT men ought not to be pleas'd with, that we ought not
to do, to pleaſe men thereby.
II. WHAT men ought to be pleas'd with, that we are bound to
do, that men may be pleas'd therewith.

irſt, WHATEVER men may innocently be pleas'd with, that we
y innocently do, in order to pleaſe men.

OD hath implanted in our ſouls a natural deſire of pleaſure, which
ſequently in ſome caſes we may give way to; becauſe otherwiſe this
ire would be implanted in vain: to be pleas'd therefore is not al-
ys a ſin, but is good or evil, according to its different cauſes, occa-

ſions,

ſions, and circumſtances. What things God hath not forbid us to pleas'd with, in thoſe we may innocently take pleaſure: and as we m without guilt, be pleas'd our ſelves; ſo may we, with innocence, co tribute to the warrantable pleaſures of each other: for what anoth can innocently be pleas'd with, that I may do without ſin; ſince if could not do it without ſin, neither could he without guilt be plea in my doing of it, becauſe no one ought to be pleas'd with any acti which is in the leaſt ſinful; and if an action be in it ſelf lawful, it ca not become otherwiſe by its pleaſing others, unleſs there were ſo law of God againſt doing any thing which might pleaſe our broth But that a thing pleaſes, is ſo far from making what is in it ſelf innoc to become ſinful, that rather of indifferent it makes it a duty: for ſin we are bound to contribute to the happineſs of our brethren, and ſo as we do pleaſe them without expoſing them to any miſchief, we make them happy; to pleaſe others, where it can be done without ſi ſeems to be an act of brotherly charity. God hath been ſo indulgen to us, that he hath debarr'd us from no pleaſures, but ſuch as will laſt end in grief and pain; and we are ſo far from being forbidden promote the pleaſure of others, that we are never reſtrain'd from pleaſing them, but where the pleaſure which we afford them will at la tend to their hurt. This rule will juſtifie us in the uſe of all innocen methods of pleaſing each other. We may comply with the warrantabl cuſtoms of the age, and with the manners of thoſe we live with: w may make our perſons acceptable to thoſe with whom we converſe, by civil and obliging converſation: we may divert their imagination wit the pleaſantry of wit, and innocent mirth; and much more feed thei underſtandings with delightful truths: in ſhort, we may miniſter to any unforbidden pleaſure of each other, without being guilty of ſo pleaſing men, as to diſpleaſe *God, who trieth our hearts.* But, in the

Second PLACE, What men ought not to be pleas'd with, that we ought not to do, to pleaſe men thereby.

THE pleaſures of men are to be bounded within certain limits, beyond which if they paſs, they become unwarrantable. The will of man by the law of our creation, ought to be ſubordinate to the will of God whilſt it conforms it ſelf to that rule, it is juſt; when it any way tranſgreſſes that, it becomes unjuſt. When man therefore is pleas'd with that which diſpleaſes God, this pleaſure is ſinful; becauſe nothing which is contrary to the will of God, ought to be the object of our pleaſure. And as men ought not to be pleas'd with any thing which is ſinful, ſo ought they not to do any thing which is ſinful, *to pleaſ* each other; for what is in it ſelf unlawful, cannot become law*ful by it* pleaſing; ſince the pleaſing or diſpleaſing men is wholly extrinſeca to the morality of our actions, any otherwiſe than as God command or forbids us to pleaſe them: to ſome men indeed our actions will b pleaſing or diſpleaſing, as they are good or bad; but they are good o bad, only as they are pleaſing or diſpleaſing to God. This rule wi condemn all endeavour to pleaſe men, by doing any thing which i evil; evil to them, or to us; deſtructive to their ſalvation, or to ou own.

AND *Firſt*, We muſt not, to pleaſe men, do any thing which is prejudicial to their ſalvation.

IT is the height of folly, to be pleas'd with what tends to our ruin and of cruelty, to pleaſe others at the expence of their eternal happineſs.

eſs. He would do a very inhuman office to his friend, who ſhould
dminiſter him a deadly draught, tho' it pleaſ'd his palate, and were
weeter than honey in his mouth. By this vicious complaiſance the
erpent firſt beguil'd *Eve*; and ſhe, being deceiv'd, brought *Adam* in-
o the tranſgreſſion; when ſhe had taſted the forbidden fruit, and eaten
hereof, ſhe was willing, in great courteſy, to oblige her Lord, by com-
unicating to him, in the ſame morſel, pleaſure and death. Of the
me fatal treachery are all thoſe inſtruments of Satan guilty, who in-
ruct raw and unpractis'd ſinners in the ways of vice; bring them firſt
quainted with ſin; and take upon them, with the Devil on the mount,
ſhew them the world, and the pleaſures of it. Theſe make it their
ſineſs to call aſide paſſengers, who are going on right in the ways of
rtue, and to lead them officiouſly into the more pleaſant paths of
ce. *Whoſo is ſimple,* they bid *him turn* aſide thither; *and as for him*
at wanteth underſtanding, they ſay *unto him, ſtoln waters are ſweet,*
d bread eaten in ſecret is pleaſant. Thus, *with much fair ſpeech*
ey *cauſe him to yield*; *with the flattering of* their *lips* they enſnare
im. *He goeth after* pleaſure *ſtraitway, as an ox goeth to the ſlaughter,*
as a fool to the correction of the ſtocks: as a bird, he haſteth to the
are, and knoweth not that it is for his life; till at laſt he finds, by
experience, that this pleaſant way *leads to hell, and goes down to*
chambers of death.

Prov. 9. 16. 17.

Prov. 7. 21, &c.

NEXT to this firſt rank of ſinners, who pleaſe men by being their
tors and directors in vice, are thoſe complaiſant perſons, who, tho'
y do not plainly and expreſly invite men to be wicked, yet counte-
nce them in their vice, and encourage them to continue in it, by
ttery or connivance. They know how unable vice is to ſuſtain it ſelf
der diſgrace; and how glad a vicious man is, when his ſins, of which
himſelf is naturally aſham'd, are kept in countenance by thoſe with
om he converſes. Theſe courteous men therefore are careful ſtrict-
to watch all their words, leſt any ſhould eſcape them, which might
ray the leaſt diſlike of what thoſe perſons do, whoſe ruin they had
her ſee, than feel their diſpleaſure. If, by oppoſing themſelves to
licentious practices of a daring ſinner, they ſhould chance to offend
, ſome ſmall temporal intereſt of their own might be in danger;
ich, becauſe it is their own, they do not think worth hazarding, to
rchaſe the eternal ſalvation of another. If their deluded friend ſhould
ſo hardy, as to walk upon a precipice, they are more complaiſant
n to ſpoil a frolick, tho' the next ſtep may be into *the depths of hell.*
er men of ſuch ſordid ſpirits ſinners have as great a power, as they
e over their own conſciences: when ungodly men have once pre-
l'd with their conſciences not to accuſe them, theſe flatterers ſoon
e the hint, and preſently ſtop their mouths; and both together ſuf-
the habitual ſinner to go on quietly to perdition. For ſuch men
nk it ſufficient, that their charity to the ſoul of their brother ſhould
p pace with his love to himſelf: and if it is his pleaſure to ſacrifice
ſoul to his luſts, he diſpoſeth of what is his own; and they will not
ſo impertinently rude, as to intermeddle in the concerns of another.
ey find it is his humour to live without controul, and they know
w to make their court better than to attempt to ſave a man againſt
will.

THIS ſordid compliance with the wicked, for fear of diſpleaſing them,
it is a ſign of a baſe and ſervile ſpirit, wherever it is met; ſo is it

attended with greater degrees of guilt and ſcandal in thoſe, whoſe pe
culiar office it is boldly to rebuke ſin, and to ſhew the people their tranſ
greſſions. God hath denounc'd very ſevere woes againſt thoſe Seers
who *ſhut their eyes, and will not ſee*; who *ſpeak ſmooth things, an*
propheſie deceit; who *ſow pillows* under the arms of ſinners, that the
may ſleep on ſecurely, and take their eaſe. Should the Miniſters
the Goſpel ſuit their doctrines, not to the edification, but to the p
1 Theſ. 2. 4. lates of their hearers; ſhould they, *who are allow'd of God to be put*
truſt with the Goſpel, even ſo ſpeak, not as pleaſing God, which trie
2 Cor. 4. 2. *our hearts, but as pleaſing men*; ſhould they *handle the word* of G
deceitfully, not *by manifeſtation of the truth commending themſelves*
every man's conſcience, but by diſſimulation of the truth commendi
themſelves to ſome men's favour; ſhould they, in order to complime
ſinners of diſtinction and rank, repreſent the way which leadeth un
life, as much broader, and the gate which entreth into heaven, a
great deal wider, than Chriſt in the Goſpel hath taught us they ar;
ſhould they take more care to advance pleaſing errors, than to prea
uſeful truths; ſhould they alter, ſhould they diſguiſe, ſhould they ſti
any fundamental points, either of the Chriſtian faith, or of the Chriſtia
practice, which they had formerly inculcated with zeal and earneſtneſs
not becauſe they judged ſuch points to be leſs true, leſs neceſſary, o
leſs ſeaſonable, but merely becauſe they found them to be leſs taking
leſs popular, and leſs faſhionable, than they had been; ſhould, *I ſay*,
the ſtewards of the myſteries of God be at any time thus unfaithful,
they would probably incur the diſpleaſure even of thoſe very men, whom
by ſo ſcandalous a conduct they ſought to pleaſe; they would certain
ly expoſe themſelves to the juſt cenſures of all wiſe and good men, an
Mal. 2. 8. 9. to the utmoſt indignation of an offended God. Should we thus *depar*
out of the way, ſhould we *cauſe many to ſtumble at the law*, ſhould
we corrupt the covenant of God, it would be juſt in God to make us
contemptible and baſe before all the people, according as we have no
kept his ways, but have been partial in his law. But were we ſure to
pleaſe men by ſuch baſe compliances, yet ſhould we deſerve ill of thoſe
whom by thus pleaſing we expos'd to ruin. Better are the keeneſt re
proofs of an open enemy, than the fatal endearments of thoſe fa
friends, who, whilſt they flatter men into damnation, and betray thoſe
to whom they make their court, have no other title, than *Judas* had
to be numbred amongſt the faithful *ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt*.

BUT *Secondly*, As we may not pleaſe men, by doing any thing whic
is deſtructive to their ſalvation; ſo neither may we pleaſe them, by
doing any thing which may endanger our own.

CHARITY to my brother obliges me rather to incur his diſpleaſure
than to contribute to his ruin; and charity to my own ſoul will mak
me rather venture to diſpleaſe man, than God. It is not lawful for an
man to make his pleaſure the rule of his own actions; much leſs oug
another to make his will the meaſure of mine. He, who expects th
I ſhould comply with him, is himſelf bound up by the ſame laws a
am: we are both limited by the laws of God, and it can be no exc
to either of us, that we ſeek to gratify our fellow-ſervant, by tra
greſſing the commands of our common Lord and Maſter. When
any time we conſult the pleaſure, and comply with the deſires of e
other, it is not ſo properly men whom we deſire to pleaſe, as God, w
hath commanded us in ſome things to pleaſe men: and to ſhew that

t the pleaſure of man which governs us, any otherwiſe than in ſub-
nation to God's, when the will of our fellow-creatures runs counter
e commandments of God our Creator, we ought no longer to ſhew
ſelves obſequious and complaiſant.

HATEVER motives can be urg'd for our compliance in any thing
h is ſinful, will betray the cauſe which they are brought for, and
much ſtronger for a peremptory refuſal. If, to work upon our
tude, paſt favours are pretended, why we ſhould not ſtand out, the
ies we have receiv'd from God are infinitely greater, the obliga-
to him earlier, and the ties by which we are bound to him much
ger. If thoſe who would have us do their pleaſure, addreſs them-
s to our hopes, by ſhewing that it is our intereſt to humour them,
ould prevail upon our fears, by repreſenting to us the ill conſe-
ces of diſobliging them; yet heaven hath greater rewards in ſtore
they can promiſe, much more than they can make good; and hell
greater plagues in reſerve than they can threaten, much more than
can inflict. If we chuſe to offend them, rather than diſobey God,
ave juſt reaſon to hope, that his providence will ſhelter us from
ill effects of their diſpleaſure: but if to pleaſe them we offend God,
power is unable to ſecure us from, or to ſupport us under, his
aſure: his anger is unavoidable, ſo that there is no flying from it;
ngeance is inſupportable, ſo that there is no abiding under it. We
ſometimes incur the diſpleaſure of men, for not conforming our
ice to theirs, but we can never deſerve it; and this teſtimony of
wn conſcience, that we ſuffer unjuſtly, will bear us up againſt their
rowns: but we can never diſpleaſe God, but we muſt at the ſame time
ound our own conſcience, which will then be ſo far from ſupporting
s under the weight of God's diſpleaſure, that it will it ſelf prove a bur-
en too great for man to bear. From men's diſpleaſure, be the effects
it at preſent never ſo ſevere, there will in a ſhort time be a final re-
; but the divine vengeance will purſue us out of this world into
next: in the grave we ſhall not find any ſanctuary againſt that pu-
ment, which will laſt as long as the guilt which deſerves it, the
which ſuffers it, and God who inflicts it. Theſe thoughts ought
ys to be preſent to our minds, to deter us from ſeeking to pleaſe
en by any ſinful practices; for no temptation, which Satan uſeth,
ns better to his account, or betrays more ſouls into the ſnares of
h, than this fear of diſpleaſing men. It is not the perſecution of
nts only, that makes men fall from their duty, but every private
hath that awe over his neighbour, as to fright him into ſin: it is
only out of the fear of death, or baniſhment, or poverty, or any
of the firſt magnitude, that we tranſgreſs the laws of God; but
fear of an angry word, an unkind look, a cool indifference towards
ſhall make us comply with what we know to be ſinful and damn-
.

OR doth this fear work only upon baſe and cowardly ſpirits, but
n thoſe alſo that have the reputation of the moſt brave. He that
undauntedly mount a breach, and advance to the mouth of a ca-
; yet hath not courage enough to be ſober amongſt the intempe-
, or to refuſe a challenge. Nay, thoſe very perſons who have not
n afraid at the frowns of a Prince, but have been content to loſe all
y had, rather than to abjure their religion at his command; yet have
n known to live in direct oppoſition to it, rather than, by being

ſingular, to diſoblige thoſe with whom they have convers'd. This co pliance with ſinful practices, in order to pleaſe ſinners, borroweth t diſguiſe of ſeveral good qualities, and puts on very plauſible nam When the *Romaniſt* would have us believe as the Church believes, calls this compliance Catholick-communion: when one, who gives hi ſelf a latitude in living, would prevail with us to do as he doth, he c this good-nature: to fall in with all the modiſh vices of the age, is ſt good-breeding: and thoſe who would perſwade others to run into ſame exceſs of riot, as they allow themſelves in, term this good-fello ſhip. That indifference to all religions, and all communions, which deſervedly odious, when it is call'd by its own true name of lukewar neſs, muſt be recommended under the more ſpecious title of tem and moderation: and that atheiſm and infidelity, which would fri people from being proſelytes thereto, if they were directly propos'd ſuch, muſt, in order to gain converts, borrow the gentler appellati of free-thinking, and diveſting our ſelves of the prejudices of education The more frequent this vicious compliance is, and the more ſpeciou appearances it carries, the more we ought to be upon our guard agai it, as knowing it is too great a ſtrain of complaiſance to commit rather than to do what they call a rude thing: and we carry the com pliment too far, when we pleaſe men at the expence of our own eve laſting ſalvation. But tho' we ought not to pleaſe men, by doing an thing which may endanger their ſouls, or our own; yet there are othe caſes, wherein it is not only lawful, but our bounden duty to pleaſe men; ſince in theſe the pleaſing of men is one part of that duty, whic we owe to our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. For,

Thirdly, WHAT men ought to be pleas'd with, that we ought t do, that men may be pleas'd therewith.

SINCE God's will is the rule of man's, whatever actions are agree-ble to the laws of God ought to be pleaſing to men: and as men ough to be pleas'd, when God's name is glorified by the performance of hi will; ſo ought they to promote the pleaſure of each other, by the mutual obſervance of his commandments. Good men are juſtly pleas when the laws of God are kept, and his name is honour'd: this ple-ſure they have a good right and title to; and that they may have f-
Mat. 5. 16. quent opportunities of exerciſing it, *our light ought ſo to ſhine befor* theſe righteous perſons, *that ſeeing theſe our good works, they may* be pleas'd, and *glorifie our Father which is in heaven.* I do not ſay, tha we ought to perform good actions only that we may pleaſe men; for i they be done barely for this end, they commence bad actions; and ſuc as good men, if they are aware that they proceed from this bad *principl* ought not to be pleas'd with. But ſince God hath annex'd praiſe an eſteem to virtuous actions, which, as they are pleaſing to him, ſo the procure us alſo the good will of men; ſuch actions as theſe are not le
Philip. 4 8. but more our duty, for being amiable and pleaſing. *Whatſoever thin are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, wh ſoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if the be any praiſe*, our Apoſtle commands us to *think on ſuch things*. W are not to think of theſe, only becauſe they procure us love, repu tion, and praiſe; but becauſe being juſt, pure, and virtuous, they a ſuch as ought to be belov'd, eſteem'd, and prais'd. This love, eſtee and praiſe, were they ſeparated from juſtice, purity, and virtue, oug not to be aim'd at by us: but ſince the pleaſing of men naturally ari

fro

m our performance of ſuch laudable actions, we muſt, by the doing ſe, contribute to the pleaſure of godly men. This rule will not only rrant us, but oblige us, to pleaſe good men, by keeping all the laws God: and becauſe all men, whether they are or not, yet ought to pleas'd with what tends to the honour of Religion, to the good of n's ſouls, and to the publick peace; it will be our duty to endea- ur the pleaſing of men, in order to promote theſe great ends.

AND *Firſt* we muſt pleaſe men, that we may thereby promote the our of our Religion.

SOME men miſtake ill-nature for a certain ſign of grace, and think y are not ſuch as they ought to be, unleſs in every thing they are gular: to hate the world, and to be hated by it, is, in their opinion, duty and lot of all Chriſt's diſciples; and they are apt to ſuſpect mſelves, if others think well of them, or are pleas'd with any thing y do. Hence, in the whole conduct of their lives, they take a great ight to thwart and to croſs others: by a rude and churliſh behaviour y declare an open defiance to mankind, and think they can never eaſe God, but by diſpleaſing men. This ſour and rugged temper of e men, who pretend to be good Chriſtians, purely becauſe they are like other men, and who exclude all ſuch from being religious, who not like themſelves, brings a great ſcandal on that faith which they feſs, and, by this malignancy of ſpirit, diſparage. For ſweetneſs of ure, and an obliging deportment, have a good title to, and are in ſent poſſeſſion of, a very fair reputation in all civiliz'd parts of the world; ſo that religion muſt needs ſuffer much in the opinions of men, if it ſhould be thought to countenance ill-nature and ill-breeding. Courteouſneſs and affability, meekneſs and deference to others, have had a place amongſt moral virtues, in all the ſchemes of duty that have yet ppear'd in the world: and it would be a great reproach on the Goſpel, ſuppoſe that we muſt put off all humanity, before we can commence d Chriſtians. There are indeed ſeveral things, wherein it is unlaw- for us to comply with the cuſtoms of the world; but the more we bound up in theſe caſes, the more cautious we ought to be in other ngs not to be ſtiff and humourſom. If in ſome things we are forc'd to be ſingular, becauſe our holy religion will not permit us to do as hers do, the beſt way to convince mankind, that this proceeds not m frowardneſs, and that we do not take delight to oppoſe others, l be by ſhewing a ready compliance, and a ſincere deſire to pleaſe, ere we have a greater ſcope, and where the laws of God are ſo far m forbidding us, that they oblige us to comply. This endeavour to aſe men, will free our religion from the ſcandal of ſowring men's pers, of rendring them moroſe and unſociable, ſullen and perverſe, natur'd and untractable, which are qualities of ſo odious a character, t a religion which ſhould ſeem to inſpire them, would be thought y improper for perſons of good nature, and ingenuous education; t is, for the very beſt part of mankind to be govern'd by. And as ought thus to pleaſe men, in order to vindicate the honour of our ligion; ſo

Secondly, WE ought to pleaſe men, in order to promote the ſpiri- l good of their ſouls.

WHEN our Apoſtle lays down this general precept, *Let every one aſe his neighbour*, he immediately ſubjoins to what end this pleaſing our neighbour ought to be directed, namely, *for his good to edification.* Rom. 15. 2.

tion. This, as it is the end which he recommends to others to purſu
ſo was it the ſcope to which his own endeavours to pleaſe were conſtan
1 Cor. 10.33. ly directed: *I pleaſe all men,* ſaith he, *in all things, not ſeeking mine ow*
profit, but the profit of many, that they might be ſav'd. This was t
reaſon of his eaſy compliance, and adapting himſelf to the ſeveral te
1 Cor. 9. 19, &c. pers and humours of thoſe he convers'd with: if he was a *ſervant*
to all men, it was *that he might gain the more: unto the Jews he b*
came as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews: to them that were und
the law, as under the law, that he might gain them that were und
the law: to them that were without law, as without law, that he mig
gain them that were without law: to the weak he became as weak, th
he might gain the weak: and was made all things to all men, that
might by all means ſave ſome. For our Apoſtle, who was perfectly w
skill'd in all the arts of divine oratory, underſtood very well how neceſ
ry it is, in order to convincing men's judgments, and influencing th
actions, to be firſt of all maſter of their affections. If we would hav
men come in eaſily to our opinions, and be govern'd by our counſel
we muſt take care ſo to demean our ſelves, that they may be plea
with us, and have an eſteem for our perſons. It will be difficult
convince any, that we have an earneſt zeal for the good of their ſou
and a paſſionate deſire to promote their eternal welfare, if at the ſam
time we do any thing which may juſtly offend and diſquiet them, an
make their preſent condition uneaſy and unpleaſant. He who pretend
to adviſe and direct another, challengeth ſome ſort of ſuperiority over
him; which the pride that is natural to all men, makes them very diffi
cultly bear: it is neceſſary therefore that he ſhould temper his advic
with a mixture of ſweetneſs, and take care that his demeanour be ſuch
as may prepare the mind of his diſciple to ſubmit more willingly to hi
direction.

Those wholſom inſtructions, which charity requires us to give t
our brethren, are generally ſuch, as in their own nature are *not* ve-
ry grateful and pleaſing to the deprav'd appetites of men: to make
them therefore the more acceptable, and that they may be the bette
reliſh'd, they muſt be ſet off with an air of pleaſantneſs; and what
it ſelf is diſtaſtful, muſt have its bitterneſs diſſembled, that it may
the eaſier taken down, and convey health to the diſtemper'd ſoul. Hence
the wiſdom of the ancients thought it proper to couch the ſevere pre-
cepts of morality under the pleaſantneſs of fable; they cloath'd their no-
tions of philoſophy, and the ſober dictates of right reaſon, in the gai
dreſs that poetry could furniſh; and took care to pleaſe the fancies
their hearers, that by theſe means they might inſinuate themſelves in
to their good eſteem; and by pleaſing might profit them. And ou
Saviour, in condeſcenſion to the infirmities of men, hath vouchſaf'd t
uſe, and by his uſing hath ſanctified this method of inſtruction. H
hath deliver'd the doctrines of the Goſpel in the delightful ſtyle of p
rables, which in their firſt and literal meaning are fitted to entertain a
to divert the hearer, and ſo to prepare his mind for the reception
thoſe practical truths, which are conceal'd under them, and convey
by them.

Now ſince Chriſtian charity obligeth us to ſeek the ſpiritual go
of others, and experience ſheweth us, how naturally eſteem or di
eſteem, approbation or diſlike, paſs from perſons to doctrines; that o
endeavours to promote the ſpiritual welfare of our brethren may hav

etter effect, we ought to ſtudy the pleaſing thoſe, whom without ng we cannot profit; to this end our Apoſtle made it his utmoſt to pleaſe men, and, by thus pleaſing them, did the office of an tle or Servant of Jeſus Chriſt. And as the private intereſt of our bour is a good end of endeavouring to pleaſe; ſo —

irdly, We muſt endeavour to pleaſe others, in order to promote ublick peace.

e are commanded *to follow peace with all men*; and becauſe there me proper means of attaining this end, we are alſo oblig'd to *fol-* *fter the things which make for peace*. All thoſe words and actions, h have any influence towards the eſtabliſhing an amicable corre- dence amongſt our fellow-Chriſtians, are, by virtue of this precept, r of ſtrict duty; and all, which have the leaſt tendency to diſquiet inds of our brethren, are, by force of the ſame precept, utterly ful. Now if we cloſely obſerve the origine of all quarrels, we find, that they ariſe from the diſpleaſure we conceive one againſt her. We may perceive by our ſelves, how nicely tender ſelf-love how deſirous we are, that every one ſhould do what we like; and we are preſently upon the alarm, if any one betrays the leaſt ſlight , by doing what is diſpleaſing to us: we may be ſure this ſelf-love nted as deeply, and works as ſtrongly in other men, as in us; they s much addicted to their own humours, as we are to ours; and s little to be thwarted in them as we do: if therefore we are ſen- how quick and ſevere our own reſentments are, when any thing e which offends us, if we would not awaken the ſame reſentments ers, we muſt be careful not to do any thing, which may juſtly diſpleaſe them. We all naturally deſire to be pleas'd, but if each ſhould conſtantly follow his own humour, we ſhall mutually interfere one with another. The beſt way to provide for our own ſatisfaction, and the publick peace, will be to gratify each other; to procure the courteſy of ers, by complaiſance towards them, and by a mutual commerce of offices of humanity to keep up that good order, which, upon the failure of theſe duties, is preſently diſturb'd. That inward peace, h conſiſts in unity of mind, and agreement of judgment, is rather wiſh'd, than hop'd for, in a perverſe generation: but even then, we cannot come up to this happy ſtate, we may preſerve that tward quiet, which conſiſts in the reciprocal diſcharge of all the du- of civility.

Heb. 12. 14.
Rom. 14. 19.

HIS tender care how we diſpleaſe others, as it procures their good to us, ſo it keeps alive ours to them: for ſince it is difficult to have armth for any, in whom we perceive a coolneſs towards us, the e actions of ours, which create an averſeneſs in them, will by de- es extinguiſh in our minds that charity, which ought always to be ive in us towards our Chriſtian brethren. The reconciling of dif- ences, when they are come to full growth, and the reſtoring of peace, ere it hath been long broken, are attended with ſo many difficulties, t they ſeldom prove ſucceſsful. It will be much eaſier by pleaſing h other, to ſuppreſs this evil in its firſt riſe, to prevent its birth, d to hinder its conception. *The beginning of ſtriſe, is as when one teth out water*; which, having once paſt its banks, ſpreads it ſelf a vaſt extent, but might, by a moderate care at firſt, have been kept ithin its due compaſs. Now ſince all thoſe quarrels, which diſturb at mutual concord that ought to be amongſt all Chriſtians, have their

Prov. 17. 14.

firſt riſe from ſome miſunderſtandings betwixt them; ſince theſe ari from our diſobliging each other by words or actions not pleaſing; prevent theſe miſchiefs, and to preſerve that brotherly love, which the peculiar duty and character of Chriſtians, we are oblig'd to ende vour the pleaſing of each other. *Glory to God, peace on earth,* *good will towards men,* are the great ends of the Goſpel: ſince the fore by pleaſing men, we may promote the honour of our Religion, publick peace, and the ſalvation of each other; to pleaſe men, in der to theſe good ends, is to acquit our ſelves faithful ſervants of Je Chriſt.

But tho' in theſe things we ought to pleaſe men, yet we muſt reſt here: the pleaſing of men muſt not be the chief reaſon and ultim end even of our good actions. For he who is govern'd by no better principle than this, acts by a very unſteady, inſufficient, dangerous, falſe rule. But I ſhall leave the farther proſecution of this ſubject another time.

SERMON XXVIII.

Not as pleaſing Men, but GOD.

GAL. I. 10.

For if I yet pleaſ'd Men, I ſhould not be the ſervant of Chriſt.

The ſecond Sermon on this Text.

THERE being ſeveral paſſages in holy Writ, and particularly in the Writings of St. *Paul*, which ſeem abſolutely to condemn all endeavours to pleaſe men by our actions, as utterly inconſiſtent with our duty to God; and there being ſeveral other places of Scripture, and many even in the Epiſtles of the ſame St. *Paul*, which plainly allow and enjoyn us to endeavour ſo to order all our actions, as to recommend our ſelves thereby to the approbation and good will of men; in order to reconcile theſe ſeeming inconſiſtencies, and to regulate our conduct in this point, I propos'd to ſhew when, and in what caſes, an endeavour to pleaſe men was innocent, when a ſin, when a duty, and reduc'd what I had to ſay to theſe three propoſitions, which I thought to be ſafe rules of practice.

I. WHATEVER men may innocently be pleas'd with, that we may innocently do, in order to pleaſe men.

II. WHAT men ought not to be pleas'd with, that we ought not to do, to pleaſe men thereby.

III. WHAT men ought to be pleas'd with, that we are bound to do, that men may be pleas'd therewith.

THESE three propoſitions I ſeverally conſider'd, and, as to the firſt, I prov'd that indifferent actions, neither commanded nor forbidden by God, did not become criminal by their pleaſing men, and that therefore ſince we were at liberty to do ſuch actions, this liberty was not abridg'd by our pleaſing men in doing ſuch innocent actions; but that we having full power to do ſuch actions purely to pleaſe our ſelves, had at leaſt equal, if not greater power to do the ſame actions, in order to pleaſe our brethren.

But then, as to the ſecond propoſition, I prov'd that ſinful actions, ſuch as are forbidden by God, could not become innocent by their being intended to pleaſe men thereby, and that therefore all thoſe actions, which were either in themſelves, or in their conſequences, evil; which were either evil to us, or to our brethren, deſtructive to our ſalvation, or to theirs, were to be reckon'd amongſt thoſe actions, whereby w muſt not endeavour to pleaſe men; becauſe by ſuch endeavour we ſhoul renounce the ſervice of Chriſt. From this propoſition it follows, th all allurement of men to ſin, by ſhewing them the pleaſures that are t be reap'd from ſinful practices; all encouragement of men in their vitio courſes, by flattery or connivance; all neglect of brotherly admonitio for fear of diſpleaſing, and more eſpecially all looſeneſs of diſcipline i thoſe, who have authority to reprove or correct others, out of a fooli and vitious tenderneſs of offending them, are criminally pleaſing; b cauſe, at the ſame time that they pleaſe men, they contribute to the everlaſting damnation: and again, on the other ſide, it will follow from the ſame propoſition, that all ſordid compliance with the cuſtoms and manners of a wicked and perverſe generation; all moulding of our principles and practices to the humours of other men; all conformity t the prevailing ſins of the age or place we live in; all running into the ſame exceſs of riot with others, out of any miſtaken notions of good-nature, good-breeding, or good-fellowſhip, or by whatever other good name ſo evil a thing is, or may be call'd, are alſo criminally pleaſing; becauſe we carry our compliance too far, when we endeavour to pleaſe men, at the expence of our own eternal ſalvation.

As to the third propoſition, I prov'd that all actions commanded b God, being ſuch as good men are pleas'd with, are not leſs acceptabl to God, becauſe they are pleaſing to men; that therefore we not only innocently may, but of neceſſity muſt perform ſuch actions, in order to pleaſe good men thereby; that the ſervice of God being promoted by ſome actions that pleaſe men, the pleaſing of men thereby is ſo far from being inconſiſtent with the ſervice of Chriſt, that it is part of the ſervice we owe to Chriſt: that ſince by an endeavour to pleaſe men, w may promote the honour of our Religion, which will thereby be freed from the ſcandal of ſowring mens tempers, of rendring them moro and unſociable, ſullen and perverſe, ill-natur'd and untractable; and ſince by pleaſing men, we may alſo promote the good of their ſouls, it being impoſſible almoſt to profit men without firſt pleaſing them, and it being very eaſie to profit them by pleaſing them; and ſince farther by pleaſing men we might promote mutual peace and concord, which i by nothing more diſturb'd than by diſpleaſing words or actions, an conſequently no way better preſerv'd than by words and actions ſo co triv'd as beſt to pleaſe; in order, I ſay, to promote theſe great ends, th glory of God, the good of ſouls, and the peace of Chriſtians, we oug to pleaſe men, and need not doubt but, by ſo pleaſing men, we ſhall a quit our ſelves faithful ſervants of Chriſt.

For the farther confirmation of theſe doctrines, which have been a ready deliver'd, and for the prevention of any ill uſe that may be m of our deſigning, in any of our actions, whether innocent or lauda the bare pleaſure of men, I proceed to ſhew, that tho' in ſome acti we may, and in others we muſt, endeavour to pleaſe men, yet that w muſt not reſt here; that tho' the pleaſing of men may not ſo far p judice our actions, as to make them leſs pleaſing to God, nay tho e caſes it may ſo far recommend them, as to make them more ac- able to God, yet that the pleaſing men muſt not be the only or prin- l thing deſign'd by us in any of our actions; that tho' it may be a ive and ſpur to ſome actions, it muſt not be the chief reaſon and mate end even of our beſt actions: that tho' actions otherwiſe in- ent may be done, and actions otherwiſe neceſſary muſt be done, to ſe men, yet that the pleaſing of men, which is the immediate aim ich actions, muſt it ſelf be farther directed to an higher end, which e pleaſing of God. If this matter be once ſettled, that the pleaſing od is the ultimate end, to which all our actions ought to be directed, if in purſuit of this principle all our actions are accordingly directed is end, then the limitations and rules before given about pleaſing , and the determinations, how far we may, or may not, or muſt avour to pleaſe men, will be obſerv'd on courſe. We ſhall not fear ing men in indifferent things, becauſe we ſhall not thereby fall ſhort r main end, which is to pleaſe God: we ſhall not dare to pleaſe in unlawful things, becauſe we ſhall thereby act in contradiction ur main end by diſpleaſing God: we ſhall be careful to pleaſe men oing our duty, becauſe we ſhall thereby promote our main end in ing God; but then laſtly we ſhall not acquieſce in the pleaſure of , as the reward of our duty, or aim at their pleaſure, as the ſole ciple and great motive of our duty, becauſe this were to ſtop ſhort ur chief and laſt end, which is the pleaſing, not of men, but of G

HAT therefore the reaſonableneſs of the rules before given for our onduct in this matter may the better appear, and that thoſe actions hich we are allow'd or commanded to do, in order to pleaſe men, may t loſe their worth and value by being directed no farther, I go on to ve ſome plain reaſons, why the pleaſing of men ought not to be made e chief end of our good actions; which tho' it is a truth, that in ſpe- lation is not perhaps much diſputed, ſo that it may not perhaps ſeem ant proof, yet is it a truth, which in practice is not much regarded, therefore hath the ſame occaſion, as all other practical truths have, e ſet in its true light, in order to convince men of their guilt in not g up to it.

NOW, that we ought not to make the pleaſing of men the chief end ur actions, even our beſt ones, is evident upon theſe two accounts.

BECAUSE if we ſhould never ſo much endeavour to pleaſe men, we might not be able to compaſs our aim; ſo that it will be in vain to endeavour it.

I. BECAUSE tho' we were ſure to pleaſe men, if we endeavour'd it, yet we ought not to make this our utmoſt aim, becauſe it is our bounden duty to aim at ſomething farther.

irſt, IF we ſhould never ſo much endeavour to pleaſe men, we might be able to compaſs our aim; ſo that it would be in vain to endea- r it.

OME philoſophers, having obſerv'd that the happineſs of men con- in attaining thoſe ends which they propoſe to themſelves, and that ir miſery is owing to their falling ſhort of thoſe things they endea- r after, in order to aſcertain to their diſciples a perpetual uninter- pted happineſs, and to ſecure them from all poſſibility of being at any time in the leaſt unhappy, have directed them never to purſue any go but what it was in their own power to compaſs; never to decline any e but what it was in their own power certainly to avoid. For by th regulating their deſires and averſions; by propoſing nothing to the ſelves which others could defeat them of; by fearing nothing wh others could bring upon them againſt their wills, they could never m what they aim'd at, becauſe it was purely in their own power to att it; they could never ſuffer what they declin'd, becauſe it was enti in their own power to be ſecure from it.

Now this advice had been very proper, had it been practicable; being ſuch as could not be taken, was to little purpoſe given. ſince men have a natural inclination to ſome things, which it is no their power of themſelves to compaſs, and a natural averſion to ot things, which it is not always in their power of themſelves to avo ſince, for inſtance, they cannot but deſire bodily eaſe, and be averſ bodily pain, and yet cannot always procure the one or remove the ot it is not poſſible for them to regulate their deſires or averſions by precept, becauſe they are not at their own choice, but are neceſſa determin'd to the purſuit of what they are not ſure to attain, and the avoidance of what they are not ſure to eſcape. But tho' this r of theirs is of no uſe, where we are not at liberty to follow it, beca that which we are caution'd not to deſire is neceſſary to our happineſ and therefore neceſſarily deſirable, and that which we are bidden no to fear, is ſuch as will certainly make us unhappy, and therefore ne ceſſarily terrible; yet where we are at liberty to obſerve this rule where we need not deſire what we are not ſure to obtain, becauſe w may be happy without it, or need not decline what we are not ſure t avoid, becauſe we may be happy notwithſtanding it; there I think th direction of theirs to be a very wiſe one, and fit to be follow'd by every good Chriſtian.

Now to apply this to the caſe before us. If the happineſs or miſery of a Chriſtian did neceſſarily depend upon his pleaſing or diſpleaſing men; if it were impoſſible for him to be happy, unleſs men approv'd o his actions; and if he muſt be unavoidably miſerable, if men diſapprov of his actions; then to tell him that he ought not to make the pleaſing of men the ultimate end of his actions, becauſe this is an end which he is not ſure with his utmoſt endeavour to compaſs, would be to tell him, that he muſt be unavoidably wretched; which would be a melanchol truth, but told him to no purpoſe; ſince he could not however forbear deſiring to pleaſe men, if he muſt be miſerable without it, tho' his deſire were in vain, becauſe what he deſir'd was utterly unattainable. *Bu* now, on the other ſide, ſince the happineſs or miſery of a Chriſtian doth not neceſſarily depend on his pleaſing or diſpleaſing men, but on hi pleaſing or diſpleaſing God; ſince he may be unhappy, tho' his action ſhould be approv'd of by men, and may be happy, tho' his actions ſhoul be diſapprov'd of by them: ſince he will be eternally bleſſed or miſerable, according as he ſhall approve himſelf to God; here to tell hi that he ought not to aim at the pleaſing of men as his ultimate an chief end, becauſe he is not ſure with his utmoſt endeavour to atta this end, is not only a certain truth, but an uſeful caution; ſince b obſerving it, he may be prevail'd with, not to weary himſelf in vai with the purſuit of what he may be happy without, and what he cannot be happy in; becauſe with all his purſuit he cannot attain it.

THAT the utmoſt endeavour to pleaſe men doth not always meet
h the deſir'd ſucceſs, is what thoſe, who have moſt tried, have ne-
fail'd to find by experience, and what any one's reaſon will ſatisfie him
without the help of ſo unprofitable an experiment. What ſome men
pleas'd with, will ſeldom fail to diſpleaſe others: and here he, who
kes the pleaſure of men the rule of his actions, will be at a great loſs
to determine himſelf; becauſe the danger of diſappointment is equal
aſt to the proſpect of ſucceſs. He that ſhall conſider, what a wide
rence there is in men's way of thinking and acting, from the dif-
nce of their complexions, tempers, humours, education, character,
feſſion, age, religion, and innumerable other ſpecialties, by which
are diſtinguiſh'd one from another, and diſpos'd to form very diſ-
eing judgments concerning the ſame perſons or things, will conclude
xt to impoſſible, that all men, or even that many ſhould concur in
verdict they paſs upon thoſe actions, which fall within their obſer-
on or cognizance.

OME ſpeculative truths there are, in which the intereſts of men
g not at all concern'd, all may unanimouſly and by joynt conſent
ectly agree in; ſome rules of life there may be, tho' theſe much fewer
the other, which moſt men may joyn in the approbation of; ſome
ues or vices, which conſider'd abſtractedly, without regard to per-
, they may agree to praiſe or to condemn: but when they come to
e of actions, not as they are in idea and imagination, but as they
n reality and fact; not as they are repreſented in books, but as they
erform'd by ſuch and ſuch men; here ſeveral things will offer them-
s to biaſs and influence their judgments: what they might have ap-
'd of, if done by another, they may out of ſome ſecret diſlike diſ-
prove of, when done by this man: what they may look upon to be
mmendable as to the matter and ſubſtance of it, they may ſuſpect to
lameable as done out of an evil deſign or principle: what they might
applauded, if done in another place, or at another time, they
now condemn as miſplac'd, or ill-tim'd: what they might have
pleas'd with apart and by it ſelf, they may be diſguſted with, when
find it accompanied with ſome other action which they diſreliſh;
t leaſt becauſe they find it done by one, whoſe other actions they
ke: what they might have been taken with at another time, when,
eaſon of the eaſineſs of their outward circumſtances, or their being
good temper of mind and body, they were diſpos'd to be pleas'd,
may at this preſent moment be offended at, as being by ſome out-
d accident, or inward indiſpoſition of ſoul or of body, ſtrongly in-
'd to be humourſom, froward, and diſpleas'd with every thing, tho'
er ſo much intended, never ſo fit, and, at another time, never ſo
ly, to pleaſe them.

ow if it be conſider'd, how apt men's judgments are to differ even
ut thoſe things, where no reaſon can be aſſign'd for their differing;
how much more apt they are to diſagree, where their different paſ-
s, humours, and intereſts diſpoſe them to think differently; if it be
conſider'd, how difficult it is for men to form a true judgment
cerning the actions of others, tho' they proceed never ſo impar-
ly, and how much more difficult it is to form a right judgment con-
ning things, of which they are diſpos'd to judge with the utmoſt par-
ity; if, beſides this, it be yet farther conſider'd, how many more and
nger motives there are to incline men to be diſpleas'd, than to be

pleas'd,

pleas'd, with the actions of each other; it will appear, that he who employs all his thoughts how to order his actions ſo, as to pleaſe th generality of men, is in great danger of employing them to no purpoſe.

If it be ſaid, that theſe reaſons do indeed prove that the vulgar par of mankind is not a proper judge of our actions, and that therefore it not worth our while to endeavour after pleaſing them; that this *bell multorum capitum*, as the Poet ſtiles the populacy, is of as many opinions, as it hath heads, and that therefore it is impoſſible to pleaſe th giddy, capricious, diſagreeing multitude, and, for that reaſon, madne to endeavour it; but that ſtill it may be worth our while to order ou actions ſo as to pleaſe the good and the wiſe; that theſe being fewer i number, we may promiſe our ſelves with moderate care to gain the votes, and favour; that theſe proceeding by the ſame principles, judgin by the ſame rules, and having the ſame inclinations, are likely to agre in their ſentiments of us; that theſe being by their wiſdom diſpos'd t judge right, and by their goodneſs inclin'd to judge kindly, are very likely to be pleas'd with our good actions; that the judgment of ſuch men who by their ability and integrity are ſo well-qualified to judge of ou actions, is highly valuable, and therefore worth our utmoſt care to compaſs; to all this I anſwer, that it muſt indeed be allow'd, that the goo opinion of ſuch men is more to be valued, and eaſier to be attain'd, and rather to be courted, than the applauſe of others: that thoſe, who fo want of the light of revelation had no other higher principle to *act upon*, than the approving of themſelves to the eſteem and good opinion of men, did very prudently and bravely in preferring the praiſe of thoſe few, whom they look'd upon to be the wiſeſt and beſt, to the applauſes o many leſs wiſe and leſs good; that it becomes us Chriſtians, in all theſe caſes, and in that meaſure, in which we are permitted or enjoyn'd to aim at the pleaſing of men, to make it our chief ſtudy to pleaſe thoſe, who are wiſe and good; but that ſtill this ought not to be our utmoſt aim, becauſe we ſhould make nothing our chief end, which we are not ſure to compaſs; and the pleaſing even of theſe men, thus qualified, i what we cannot always certainly, what probably we may not often, obtain. For wiſdom and goodneſs do not always meet in the ſame perſons; and where theſe are ſeparated, the judgments of thoſe, whoſe knowledge is greater than their honeſty, may widely differ from the ſentiments of ſuch, whoſe integrity far ſurpaſſes their prudence; ſo that what the good man in his ſimplicity approves, that a wiſer man may, either with good reaſon, as being wiſer, or without any reaſon, as being not ſo honeſt, condemn.

Those few therefore, whom we muſt ſtill hope by our actions t pleaſe, muſt be all both good and wiſe: but if none muſt be allow'd t poſſeſs theſe qualities, but thoſe whoſe judgments do conſtantly agre with the ſentiments of others, who cannot be denied to have the ſam qualities, then none at all muſt be allow'd to be both good and wiſ there being no men, to whom theſe characters can be applied, who d not often in their opinions and judgments differ from others, who ha as good a title to the ſame characters; and if thoſe who are both goo and wiſe may, and often do, in their judgments differ from others, wh are alſo good and wiſe, without any impeachment, either to their ow goodneſs or wiſdom, or to the goodneſs and wiſdom of thoſe they differ from, then it follows, that after all our care, we cannot be ſure of pleaſin

by

our actions even thoſe few, who are both good and wiſe: nay, ſo nſtant are the minds of men, ſo mutable their intereſts, and with n their inclinations, that the ſame actions are not always ſure, nay, he other ſide, are very unlikely always to pleaſe the ſame man: ſo were we to govern our lives according to any one man's pleaſure; we to make it our whole ſtudy to learn what would pleaſe him, our whole buſineſs to do what we thought would pleaſe him; we ld not be able by any art to hit that mark which conſtantly wa- No one can be ſo careful to pleaſe another, as each man is to ſe himſelf; and if, after all our care to pleaſe our ſelves, we cannot paſs what is the conſtant, uniform, uninterrupted endeavour of our much leſs ſhall we be able to pleaſe any other perſon, whoſe in- tions we can never ſo well know, as we do our own, and whoſe ſure it is not poſſible for us ſo zealouſly, ſo ſteadily, and ſo perpe- y to purſue, as we purſue our own.

INCE therefore thoſe actions, which may pleaſe ſome men, may leaſe others; ſince the ſame actions, which pleaſe, when done by perſons, at ſome times, in ſome places, may diſpleaſe the ſame man, n done by other perſons, or by the ſame perſon, at other times, or her places; ſince we have no rule given us to know what will pleaſe , and had we ſuch a rule we could not by obſerving it be ſure to e men; ſince men cannot always pleaſe themſelves, and can be n leſs pleas'd by others; it is in vain to make the pleaſing of men ltimate end of our actions, it being an end, we have ſo ill a pro- of ever attaining. The rule we ſhould govern our actions by ought uniform and ſteady: the ſcope we aim at ſuch, as with care and gence we may promiſe our ſelves not to miſs. Such a rule we ſhall want, if we direct our actions by the law of God; ſuch an end we propoſe to our ſelves, if in all our actions we endeavour to pleaſe What will pleaſe God we cannot be ignorant, becauſe the law is at , in which he hath declar'd his good pleaſure; an endeavour to pleaſe , by doing his declar'd will, if it be ſincere, cannot be without ſuc- becauſe he hath promis'd to crown, not our actual performances of will, but our ſincere endeavours. Thoſe who in their actions pro- nothing farther than to pleaſe men, muſt act unſteadily, becauſe rule by which they act is unſteady; their actions muſt be change- , becauſe the wills of them, whom they aim to pleaſe, do always nge; their endeavours muſt be faint and intermitted, becauſe they ſee they will be often fruſtrated. But whilſt we act by the laws of , and aim chiefly at pleaſing God, we ſhall, according to the advice t. Paul, *be ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of* 1 Cor. 15. 58. *Lord,* as having a firm principle of ſtedfaſtneſs, unchangeableneſs, perſeverance; *foraſmuch as we know that* whilſt we act by an un- ng rule, and aim at an end certainly attainable, *our labour cannot in vain in the Lord.*

SHOULD now proceed in the ſecond place to ſhew, that tho' we e ſure to ſucceed in our endeavours to pleaſe men, yet that this ht not to be our chief aim and ultimate end in any of our actions, uſe it is our duty and our intereſt to aim at ſomething farther and her, to wit, the pleaſing of God: but having dwelt too long on the head, and having not time to diſpatch what will be neceſſary to ſaid upon the ſecond, I muſt defer it to another opportunity.

SERMON XXIX

Not as pleaſing Men, but GOD.

GAL. I. 10.

The third ſermon on this Text.

For if I yet pleas'd Men, I ſhould not be the ſervant of Chri

TO ſhew the conſiſtency of St. *Paul*'s doctrine, who h
ſeems to declare againſt all endeavour to pleaſe men
incompatible with the ſervice of Chriſt, and who el
where ſolemnly profeſſes, that he ſought to *pleaſe all m*
in all things; and at the ſame time to regulate our ow
conduct in pleaſing men, by ſhewing when, and in what caſes, we migh
or might not, or muſt endeavour to pleaſe men by our actions, I r
duc'd what I had to ſay upon this ſubject, and what I thought wou
take in all that was neceſſary to be ſaid upon it, to theſe three propo
tions:

I. WHATEVER men may innocently be pleas'd with, that we ma
innocently do, in order to pleaſe men.
II. WHAT men ought not to be pleas'd with, that we ought not
do, to pleaſe men thereby.
III. WHAT men ought to be pleas'd with, that we are bound to
that men may be pleas'd therewith.

THESE three propoſitions I have ſeverally conſider'd and prov
and from each drawn ſuch inferences, as ſeem'd to me eaſily and na
rally to flow from them, and which I thought might be of uſe for t
regulation of our practice in this matter.

FOR the farther confirmation of theſe doctrines, and for the preve
tion of any ill uſe that might be made of the allowances thereby giv
to endeavour the pleaſing of men in ſome of our actions, I though
proper, in the laſt place, to limit what had before been deliver'd wi
this reſtriction, that tho' in ſome actions we may, and in others we mu
endeavour to pleaſe men, yet we ought not to reſt here; that the pleaſi

f men might be aim'd at by us as a ſubordinate, but not as an ulti-
ate end; that it might be the immediate aim of our actions, but that
ought it ſelf to be directed to an higher end, to wit, the pleaſing of
od.

Now that we ought not to acquieſce in the pleaſing of men, as the
hief end of thoſe actions, which we were permitted or commanded to
o, with a proſpect of pleaſing men, I thought might be prov'd from
heſe two reaſons:

I. Because if we ſhould never ſo much endeavour to pleaſe men, we might not be able to compaſs it; ſo that it would be to no purpoſe to make it our utmoſt endeavour.

II. Because tho' we were ſure to pleaſe men, if we endeavour'd it; yet we ought not to make this our utmoſt endeavour, becauſe it is our duty and intereſt to aim at ſomething farther.

The force of the firſt of theſe two reaſons I have already examin'd,
d ſhewn, that, where it is in our choice to propoſe to our ſelves what
od we will purſue, what evil we will decline; there it is folly to pro-
ſe as our chief end, the attainment of a good which we may be eaſie
thout, and which we are not ſure to be happy in, becauſe we are not
e to attain it; or to make it our chief aim to avoid an evil, which
may be eaſie under, and which we cannot be ſecure from, becauſe
are not ſure to eſcape it: that the pleaſing of men is what we may
happy without, and what we cannot be ſure to be happy in, becauſe
cannot be ſure to compaſs it; that the diſpleaſure of men is what
may be eaſie under, and what we cannot be certainly free from, be-
ſe, with all our care, we cannot be ſure to avoid it: that therefore it
ſt be extreme folly to make the pleaſing of men the ultimate end of
r actions, which both the experience of thoſe who have tried, and
reaſon of thoſe who don't care to make the trial, prove to be by
utmoſt endeavour unattainable: that the judgments of men are ſo
rious according to their different complexions, tempers, education, age,
igion, and other innumerable ſpecialties, that it was not to be expected
t all, or that many, ſhould agree in the ſame opinion about things,
hich are capable of very different appearances: that there were ſeve-
reaſons for their differing in their judgments about human actions,
ore than for their differing in their opinions about other matters; that
ere were ſtill more reaſons for their differing in their judgments about
man actions, conſider'd not in theory and abſtractedly, but in fact, as
rform'd by ſuch and ſuch perſons: that not only the learned might
fer from the vulgar, the wiſe from the fooliſh, the virtuous from the
cious, the godly from the ungodly, in their opinions about theſe things,
t that even thoſe few, who had an equal pretenſion to be eſteem'd wiſe,
rtuous, and religious, did often differ in their opinions about theſe mat-
rs; ſo that we could not be ſure by our actions ſo much as to pleaſe
men of this character: that not only one ſort of men differs from an-
her ſort, or one particular man from another particular man, but that
very ſame perſon, at different times, judges differently of the very
me actions; ſo that were we to govern our actions by any one man's
eaſure, we could not be ſure to attain it: that men with their utmoſt
deavour cannot always pleaſe themſelves, and that therefore they can
uch leſs be pleas'd by others, whoſe knowledge of what will pleaſe

them cannot be ſo certain, and whoſe endeavour to pleaſe them can-not be ſo vigorous, as their own: that for theſe and ſeveral other rea-ſons which were, and others which might be, offer'd, there was but ſmall proſpect of pleaſing men by our actions, and that therefore it was not prudent to make this our utmoſt endeavour.

But we will now ſuppoſe that this is an end poſſible, or, if you pleaſe, eaſie to be attain'd; that if we exerted our utmoſt endeavours to pleaſe men by our actions, we might at laſt compaſs it; or that if we took but moderate care to pleaſe them, we might, without any ex-traordinary difficulty, effect it: that if we could not pleaſe the genera-lity of men by our actions, we might however pleaſe the good, or the wiſe; or if that is not ſufficient, we will ſuppoſe that by our actions we might pleaſe all ſorts of men, and every particular perſon of each ſort and character; we will ſuppoſe yet farther, that the pleaſing of men were an end, that we could not only hope ſometimes, but were ſure at all times, to attain; that by our actions we could not only ſo far pleaſe men, as that none ſhould diſlike them, but as that all ſhould actually approve them; and that not only all men ſhould agree in being barely pleas'd with our actions, but that all ſhould be equally pleas'd with them, and all pleas'd as much as it is poſſible for men to be pleas'd with any thing; yet, after all theſe large conceſſions, which, as hath before been prov'd, we have no reaſon to grant, and have very good grounds not to grant, we ought not to make the pleaſing of *men the* ultimate end of our actions, becauſe, it is our duty and intereſt in all our actions to aim at ſomething farther and higher, to wit, the pleaſing of God.

That the pleaſing, not of men, but of God, ought to be the ulti-mate end of our actions, is a truth capable of being prov'd by a great variety both of arguments taken from the nature of the thing, and of texts drawn from Scripture. Whatever either arguments or texts prove that we ought to love or fear God, to worſhip and honour him, to ſerve and to obey him above all things, do alſo prove that we ought to make it our chief endeavour to pleaſe him; the pleaſing of him being either a neceſſary concomitant or effect of thoſe other duties, or a proper in-ſtance of them, or an equivalent expreſſion for them, which in other words ſignifies the very ſame thing, which is meant by them. Indeed the pleaſing of God, and the ſerving or obeying God, ſeem to be terms exactly of the ſame import: for tho', in actions done to pleaſe men, we may diſtinguiſh between the agreement or contrariety ſuch actions have to the will of thoſe, who are pleas'd or diſpleas'd with them, *and the* grateful or ungrateful ſenſation ariſing in the minds of thoſe, whoſe wills are complied with or oppos'd, which we call their pleaſure, or diſpleaſure; yet, ſince the happineſs of God is not capable of any acceſ-ſion or diminution; ſince we cannot conceive in God any paſſions like thoſe which we feel in our ſelves, when any thing good or evil, joyous or grievous, happens to us; ſince nothing which we can do is capable of cauſing delight or uneaſineſs in a Being uncapable of change; we are then ſaid to pleaſe God, when we do thoſe actions which he hath com-manded, out of obedience to his command; and he is then ſaid to be diſpleas'd, when his will is tranſgreſs'd. By the obſervance of his will nothing accrues to him, like that pleaſure which we feel, when men do what we would have done; by the tranſgreſſion of his laws nothing hap-pens to him, like that pain which we are diſturb'd with, when our will

warted: *If thou ſinneſt,* ſaith *Elihu* to *Job, what doeſt thou againſt* Job. 35. 6,7,8.
? *Or if thy tranſgreſſions be multiplied, what doeſt thou unto him?*
ou be righteous, what giveſt thou him? or what receiveth he of thy
d? Thy wickedneſs may hurt a man, as thou art; *and thy righteouſ-*
may profit the ſon of man.

o advantage or diſadvantage, no profit or hurt, no ſatisfaction or
rbance, can ariſe to God from our actions, or from any difference
is in them: but becauſe ſome actions are agreeable, ſome repugnant
s will; becauſe ſome will entitle us to a reward from God, ſome
render us obnoxious to puniſhment; and becauſe men are pleas'd
thoſe actions which are done in conformity to their will, and
thoſe, who do them, ſenſible of their being pleas'd, by rewarding
; and are diſturb'd by thoſe actions which are done in oppoſition
eir will, and make thoſe, who do them, ſenſible of their diſplea-
by puniſhing them; therefore God, of whom we muſt be con-
to ſpeak, and in ſome meaſure to conceive, after the manner of
is ſaid to be pleas'd with ſuch actions, as he approves and rewards,
o be diſpleas'd with ſuch actions, as he diſlikes and puniſhes; tho'
leaſure and diſpleaſure have nothing in them, which anſwers thoſe
ful or ungrateful perceptions we feel in our own breaſts, when
e pleas'd, or diſpleas'd. Tho' by thoſe actions, which are agree-
o the will of God, we cannot add to his joys; yet we ought to be
eful to do them, as if we did really and truly contribute to his
re: tho' by ſuch as are diſagreeable to the divine will, we cannot
ay ſully or diminiſh thoſe uninterrupted joys, which are always
t to the eternal Mind; yet we ought as carefully to abſtain from
, as if we did thereby in reality moleſt and diſquiet God. When,
cordingly, we make it our main end and endeavour to do ſuch actions
agreeable to the will of God, and to avoid ſuch as are diſagreea-
then are we ſaid to make it our utmoſt endeavour to pleaſe God:
t whatever reaſons or texts prove, that we ought to make it our
ate end to conform our lives to the will of God, and that we ought
deavour the pleaſing of men only in ſuch inſtances, where we are
'd or commanded by God to pleaſe them, and that only for this
, becauſe in ſo pleaſing of them we conform our ſelves to the
of God; the ſame reaſons and texts do prove, that we ought to make
chief and utmoſt aim to pleaſe God.

T out of that great diverſity of arguments, which might be brought
rove the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of our making it the utmoſt
avour of our ſouls, in all our actions, to do what is acceptable or
ing to God, purely becauſe it is acceptable to him, I ſhall inſiſt on
that which St. *Paul* furniſhes us with in the text: and of all
numberleſs texts, which might be drawn together to prove, that
r actions ought to be ultimately directed to the glory of God, and
r approving our ſelves to him, I ſhall point out only thoſe which
expreſs terms ſhew, that our pleaſing of men ought to be referr'd
is end. The reaſon which St. *Paul* here gives why he did not
vour to pleaſe men, that is, why he did not make this his ulti-
endeavour, is, becauſe *if he pleas'd men,* that is, if he ſought ſole-
chiefly to pleaſe men, *he ſhould not be the ſervant of Chriſt.* It
plied in the notion and office of a ſervant, that he ſhould make
will of his maſter the governing rule of all his actions: but we are
e ſervants of Chriſt; he is our Lord and Maſter; his will there-

fore ought to be the meaſure and ſtandard, compliance with his ought to be the end and ſcope, of all our actions. If we were free exempt from all ſervice, we might pleaſe our ſelves; if we were the vants of men, we not only might, but ought to pleaſe men: but we are not our own maſters, we are not at liberty to pleaſe our ſel ſince men have no maſtery over us, we are under no obligations to pl them; ſince Chriſt is our only maſter, it ought to be our ſole en vour to pleaſe him. When I ſay that we are not our own maſters, that men have no maſtery over us, I would be underſtood to ſay we have no original right to diſpoſe of our own actions, and that oth have no original claim to give laws to us: if in any caſes we are berty, it is becauſe God hath, in ſuch caſes, laid upon us no reſtr if in any thing we are under ſubjection to men, it is becauſe God commanded us, in ſuch thing, to be ſubject to them: when there we obey them, this obedience is not ſo properly paid to them, God, who hath commanded us to obey them, and in compliance whoſe commands we do obey them; ſo that God only is, in prop of ſpeech, our Maſter; his will we obey, which is convey'd to by their hands; his ſervants we are, from whom all their author is originally deriv'd, and to whom all our homage is ultimately tended.

WHAT the proper notions of a ſervant and maſter are; what the lation each bears to the other; what are the duties of the former, an the powers of the latter; what ſubjection is due from the one, an what authority belongs to the other, we are not to judge according the import which theſe words bear in our language, or according the notions of maſter and ſervant in our times and country, but acc ing to the ſignification of thoſe terms in that age, and in thoſe pla when, and where the Apoſtles wrote. Now according to the prev ing cuſtoms of thoſe places and times, under the notion of a ſerv was included, not only ſervice, but ſervitude; under the notion of maſter, not only command, but dominion. The ſervant was part, n of the maſter's family, but of his goods; the maſter had an abſolu right over his perſon, as well as his actions: whatever the ſervant able to do, he was bound to do, not for his own benefit and advan but purely for the behoof of his maſter; the fruits of his labour, and farther, the very fruit of his body, did of right belong, not to ſelf, but to his maſter: he was, in the language of thoſe times, noth elſe but a living tool and inſtrument, and had no more power over own motions, than a tool in the hands of an artificer; but was mana and diſpos'd of at the maſter's pleaſure, and employ'd in his work cording to his directions: he was reckon'd among his moveables, which the maſter had not only the uſe, ſo as to employ him how would; but the property, ſo as to diſpoſe of him as he would: he as capable of being lent, pawn'd, or ſold, as any other of his ma poſſeſſions; and it was as much in the maſter's power to alienate h or to deſtroy him, as it was to part with or to ſpoil any other kin goods, over which he had an abſolute dominion: ſo that the rel which our tranſlators have been pleas'd to expreſs by the names of vant and Maſter might, with more congruity to the ſignification of original words, and to the notions of thoſe who us'd thoſe words, been expreſs'd by the more proper terms of Slave and Owner.

I CONFESS indeed that it would ſound harſhly in our ears, to call at ſervice which we owe to God or Chriſt by the rough name of ſla- ry; ſince the ſervice which we pay to God ought not to proceed from ſervile principle of fear, but from a principle of filial reſpect and re- rence; and the ſervice which God exacts from us is not like that of abject ſlave to an imperious Lord, but like that of a good ſervant a kind maſter. But then it is obſervable that the difference betwixt t obedience which a ſlave ow'd to his Lord, and which creatures owe God, Chriſtians to their Saviour, is not founded in this, that God h leſs right over us, or we are leſs in ſubjection to him; that leſs vice is due from us, or that his authority over us is leſs extenſive; that he is graciouſly pleas'd to exerciſe his power with more mo- ation and tenderneſs, and in mercy vouchſafes to exact leſs at our ds than of right he might demand. God hath the ſame abſolute, de- tick, uncontrollable right over us, as the moſt arbitrary Lord hath r his meaneſt ſlave: he hath as great a power over our actions and ſons, as a maſter hath over the actions or perſon of his bond-ſlave; our motions, faculties, and powers are as much at his diſpoſal, as ſe of a ſlave at the diſpoſal of his maſter: but our condition doth in regard widely differ from theirs, that God's commands are tem- 'd with kindneſs and mercy, and that the ſervices, which he requires s, tend not to any emolument thereby accruing to him, but to our perſonal intereſt and advantage. But this gracious condeſcenſion ogates nothing from the unalienable right God hath to our ſervice obedience; it is not leſs our duty, becauſe it is more our intereſt, rve him: tho' neither the work requir'd at our hands is ſervile, nor principle by which we are to act ſervile, ſo that in theſe regards ſervice is ſo far from ſlavery that it is rather perfect freedom; yet, he other ſide, this is common to us with thoſe who are in a ſtate of itude, that we are not at liberty to do our own will, or the will of other, but only of him whoſe we are. *As the eyes of ſervants look* Pſal. 123. 2. *o the hands of their maſters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the d of her miſtreſs; ſo our eyes* ought to *wait upon the Lord our God,* only to receive the reward which he reaches out to us, but alſo, and in the firſt place, to receive the directions which he ſhall give us. that ſervant would be wanting in his duty, who ſhould make it his ef aim to pleaſe any other but his maſter; ſo ſhall we be wanting in s, if our chief endeavour be to pleaſe men, either in oppoſition, or much as without regard, to the pleaſure of our Lord and Maſter: as t ſervant who ſhould do what his maſter hath commanded, not be- ſe his maſter hath commanded it, but purely to pleaſe himſelf, or gratifie another, would have no title to a reward from his maſter; f we ſhould obſerve the commandments of God, not becauſe they his commandments, but becauſe we may gratifie our ſelves, or others, the obſervance of them, we have no pretenſions to a recompence m the hands of God.

CHRIST voluntarily *took upon him the form of a ſervant,* and being Phil. 2. 7. ct ſuitably to that character, *he did not his own will, but the will im that ſent him. We call Chriſt Maſter, and Lord, and we ſay ll; for ſo he is. If he then is our Lord and Maſter;* as he, whilſt was a ſervant, did not his own will, but his Father's, ſo we being ſervants, are not to do our own will, but our Maſter's: *For he hath en us an example, that we ſhould do* to him, *as he hath done to* his

John. 13. 16. Father and Maſter. *Verily verily, the ſervant is not greater than hi*
Lord, neither he that is ſent greater than he that ſent him: but if we
ſhould think our ſelves at liberty to do our own will, or the will o
any other but of Chriſt, we ſhould make our ſelves greater than our
John. 6. 38. Lord, who declares that he *came down from heaven, not to do his own*
Rom. 6. 16. *will, but the will of him that ſent him. To whom we yield our ſelve*
ſervants to obey, his ſervants we are to whom we obey: if therefor
even in thoſe things which are commanded by Chriſt, our obedience
not terminated in Chriſt, but is deſign'd only to pleaſe men, it is pla
we own our ſelves the ſervants of men, and not of Chriſt.

THIS relative ſervice of God, or the referring of all our actions t
him; this pleaſing of men only in order thereby to pleaſe God, is ſ
far from carrying our duty to too great an height, that, according t
the doctrine of ſome eminent Divines, it will rather be ſuſpected as fal
ing far beneath that pitch of perfection, to which a Chriſtian ought
riſe. Thoſe who have condemn'd a relative love of God, or the lovi
of creatures in way of relation and ſubordination to God, as defective
and criminal; and have told us, that this beſtowing our love up
on a creature for God's ſake, and in relation to God, on whom our
love is at laſt fix'd as its final object, is as bad as the *Papiſts* paying
worſhip to a creature in a relative and tranſitive way, which worſhip
they deſign ſhould paſs thro' the creature, and terminate upon God; ſo
that we muſt either allow the *Papiſt* his relative worſhip, or we muſt
condemn this relative love, as being equally with that idolatrous; thoſe,
I ſay, who have ſo ſeverely cenſur'd a relative love of God, muſt,
according to their principles, as much diſallow that relative ſervice of God,
which we have been eſtabliſhing. For if it is not ſufficient that we
make God the principal, but we muſt make him the ſole, object of our
love; then neither is it ſufficient that we make him the principal, but
we muſt make him the ſole, object of our ſervice; which is an expreſſion
and effect of our love. If, becauſe it is ſaid that *there is none good but*
God, it thence follows that there is none to be lov'd in any the leaſt
degree, or in any regard, but God; then, becauſe it is ſaid *there is but*
one Law-giver, one Lord, it will thence follow that there is none to be
obey'd, none to be ſerv'd, none to be pleas'd in any degree, or in any
regard, but God.

IF thoſe interpreters, who in examining in what ſenſe theſe words
Luk. 18. 19. are to be taken, that *there is none good but God*, are of opinion tha
we muſt underſtand by them, that there is none originally good but God,
none ſupremely good but God, do by thoſe comments put a falſe gloſs
Jam. 4. 12. upon the text, and ſhoot below the mark; then do thoſe, who by *one*
Law-giver, and one Lord, underſtand one original or ſupreme Law-giver
or Lord, cramp the text, which, according to the letter of it, ſays
abſolutely and indefinitely, without limitation, that *there is* but *one Law-*
giver, one Lord. If, becauſe God hath implanted in us the faculty of
loving, it thence follows that he hath the ſole right and title to our love, ſ
that nothing is to be belov'd but he alone; then, becauſe God hath give
us power to conform our actions to a rule, or, in other words, to obe
it will thence follow that he hath the ſole right and title to our
obedience, ſo that no Being is to be obey'd but he alone. If, becauſe ou
Matt. 6. 24. Saviour hath taught us that *no man can ſerve two maſters; for either*
he will hate the one, and love the other; or elſe he will hold to the
and deſpiſe the other, it is thence righty inferr'd, that we cannot divi
ou

love betwixt God and the creature, nor pay any the leaſt ſhare of to the creature, without robbing God of his due; it is thence much ſtrongly, becauſe more immediately, inferr'd, that we cannot di- our obedience betwixt God and the creature, nor pay any the leaſt of ſervice to the creature, without robbing God of his due. In , as far as I am able to judge, all thoſe reaſons, and all thoſe Scri- s, which are brought againſt a ſubordinate, inferior, relative love e creature, as inconſiſtent with that full, perfect, and entire love n we acknowledge due to God, do with equal force conclude againſt ſubordinate, inferior, relative ſervice of men, as inconſiſtent with full, perfect and entire obedience we muſt acknowledge to be due od. If men deifie the object they love, and idolize the creature as in any degree they affect it; then, ſince obedience doth as pro- belong to the Deity as love, and is as much challeng'd by God ve is, men deifie the object they ſerve, and idolize their fellow- ures ſo far as in any degree they obey them.

UT I am unwilling to carry the doctrine of pleaſing God to thoſe heights, as ſome pious and exalted ſouls carry the doctrine of lov- od: and tho' I think it might as fairly be defended, that God alone be ſerv'd or pleas'd, as that God alone is to be lov'd; yet becauſe refin'd doctrines are, if ſolid, yet too ſubtil; becauſe they are ra- fitted for the entertainment of notional men, than for the edifica- of the generality of Chriſtians; becauſe, as far as they differ from enerally receiv'd doctrines, they are impracticable, and, to be made icable, muſt be ſo interpreted as to fall in with what is generally 'd and taught; and eſpecially becauſe we cannot, without great vio- to Scripture, condemn all pleaſing of men as inconſiſtent with the ce we owe to God, as neither can we in my opinion condemn all of men as incompatible with the love of God; I rather chuſe to hat God is chiefly to be pleas'd, than that God alone is to be pleas'd; that the pleaſing of men is to be referr'd to the pleaſing of God, that men are not at all to be pleas'd for fear of diſpleaſing God; the other caſe I ſhould, at leaſt in a popular auditory, chuſe ra- to ſay that God is chiefly to be lov'd, than that he alone is e lov'd; and that the love of men is to be referr'd to the love of , than that all love of men *is enmity with God.* If the ſpeculations heſe men are well-grounded, the truth which I am contending for much the firmer: for if God alone is to be lov'd, and therefore e to be pleas'd; the pleaſing of men ought not to be the ultimate of our actions, becauſe it ought not at all to be aim'd at by us. But theſe ſpeculations ſhould fail, and it ſhould, as I think it muſt, be w'd, that other Beings beſides God might be lov'd or obey'd, but only in reference to God, the doctrine which I am concern'd for ſtands good, that we ought not to acquieſce in the pleaſing of men he chief and ultimate end of our actions; because it is our duty to at ſomething farther and higher, to wit, the pleaſing of God.

THIS duty, as it manifeſtly ariſes from the relation we bear to Chriſt, eing his ſervants, ſo is it expreſsly taught us in thoſe Scriptures, in ich we are directed to pleaſe men, in order thereby to approve our es to God. Nothing can be more expreſs to this purpoſe, than the cept given by our Apoſtle St. *Paul* to ſervants: *Servants, obey in all* Col. 3. 22, 23, 24. *ngs your maſters according to the fleſh; not with eye-ſervice, as men- aſers, but in ſingleneſs of heart, fearing God; and whatſoever ye do,*

do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of
Lord ye ſhall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye ſerve
Lord Chriſt. Obedience is included in the notion of a ſervant:
any caſe it is lawful for men to aim chiefly at the pleaſing of men,
is lawful for ſervants to aim chiefly at pleaſing their maſters: and
deed if thoſe whom men immediately ſerve, were their chief ma
it would be their duty chiefly to aim at the pleaſing them: but th
who are call'd maſters, are not abſolutely ſo, but with this limitat
according to the fleſh; thoſe, who are call'd their ſervants, are not
perly theirs, but Chriſt's, for they *ſerve the Lord Chriſt*: it is their
tereſt to aim chiefly at pleaſing that maſter, from whom they ex
their wages; but Chriſtian ſervants *know that of the Lord they ſhal*
ceive the reward of the inheritance, and therefore *whatſoever* they
they are requir'd to *do as unto the Lord, and not unto men.*

The ſame direction, which is given to ſervants to direct their
dience farther than to their immediate maſters, is alſo given to wi
to children, and to ſubjects, in reſpect of thoſe duties which they
Col 3. 18. to their ſeveral relatives. *Wives* are commanded to *ſubmit themſel*
to their husbands, as it is fit in the Lord, that is, becauſe the Lord
requires, and according to thoſe meaſures which the Lord requir
v. 20. *Children* are enjoyn'd *to obey their parents*, not becauſe this obedien
is acceptable to their parents, but becauſe it *is well-pleaſing to the Lor*
Rom. 13. 5. Subjects are requir'd to be obedient to magiſtrates, *not only for wrat*
or to avoid the diſpleaſure of men; *but alſo for conſcience-ſake*, to pro
cure the pleaſure of God. And it is very remarkable, that when th
Apoſtle enters upon the particular duties, ariſing from the ſeveral re
tions which inferiors bear to ſuperiors, he prefaces what he hath to ſa
to each with this general rule, which is the foundation and princip
Col. 3. 17. of all the reſt; *Whatſoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jeſu*
that is, for the ſake, and to the glory, of that Jeſus, who is your ſu
preme Lord.

Now if thoſe, who, by their ſeveral ſtations and characters, are u
der particular obligations to pleaſe thoſe to whom they are reſpectivel
ſubject, are not allow'd to acquieſce in the pleaſing of them, but are
quir'd by thoſe ſervices, which they immediately pay to men, to ai
at the pleaſing of God; then may we ſafely conclude, that thoſe, wh
are under no ſuch ſpecial engagements to pleaſe men, as being no wa
ſubject to them, but are only oblig'd to it by the general rules of hu
manity, prudence, or religion, ought much leſs to reſt in the pleaſin
of men, and much more to aim at the pleaſing of God, in thoſe action
which are likely to find acceptance both with men, and with God. Whe
1 Cor. 10. 32. St. *Paul* directs the *Corinthians* to *give none offence neither to the Jew*
nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God, and excites them to the pe
v. 33. formance of this duty by propoſing to them his own practice, *even as*
pleaſe all men in all things; that we may not think his pleaſing of men h
no farther aim than pleaſing them, or that their avoiding the giving
offence to any was intended only to eſcape the diſpleaſure of men;
lays down this precept, as preliminary to the advice he gave, and as th
v. 31. ground of his own practice; *Whatſoever ye do, do all to the glory of Go*
When, in another place he tells us, that *he made himſelf a ſervant*
1 Cor. 9. 19, 20, 21, 22. *to all men, that he might gain the more*; that *unto the Jews he beca*
as a Jew; *to them that were under the law, as under the law*; *to the*
that were without law, as without law; *to the weak, as weak*; a

ſhort that *he was made all things to all men*; that we may not think
gaining the applauſe of men was what he principally aim'd at by
s univerſal compliance, he takes care to add, that all *this he did for* 1 Cor. 9. 23, 25.
Goſpel's ſake, not to obtain a corruptible crown, but an incorruptible.
en St. *Peter* beſeeches thoſe, to whom he writes, that they would
e their converſation honeſt among the Gentiles, he doth not propoſe 1 Pet. 2. 12.
hem their being eſteem'd and well-ſpoken of by the Gentiles, as the
n reaſon of their ſtrict guard upon their converſation, but the ho-
r of God; that the Gentiles might *by their good works, which they*
ld behold, glorifie God in the day of viſitation.

Now if in thoſe places of Scripture where the pleaſing of men is
e a motive to ſome laudable and comely actions, there the glory of
, or the pleaſing of God, is at the ſame time mention'd as the end
he ſame actions, nothing can be plainer than that the pleaſing of men
t not it ſelf be the ultimate end, but muſt be referr'd to the glory
God, as the chief end of all our actions. It is not enough, that our
ons be ſuch, which, as to the matter and ſubſtance of them, are pleaſing
God, unleſs they proceed from a pure intention; our intention is
pure, when we do them out of this principle, becauſe they are
manded by God, and are acceptable to him. The actions of the
er ſort of Heathens, were, as to the ſubſtance of them, of the ſame
d with thoſe requir'd to be done by Chriſtians: but their beſt actions
been by the Fathers of the Church condemn'd as vices, and are
moſt Divines ſhut out from the number of virtues, and muſt by all
allow'd to fall ſhort of Chriſtian graces, becauſe they were perform'd
of a wrong principle of gaining the favour and applauſe of men,
not with any deſign of pleaſing God. It is the peculiar advantage
Chriſtianity, that it fixes thoſe duties it preſcribes upon ſuch a prin-
e, as will ſupport them: but the pleaſing of men is too narrow and
k a principle for us to act by; becauſe there are ſeveral degrees and
nces of duty, to which it would not extend. Actions in themſelves
faulty, and which want many of thoſe circumſtances which are ne-
ry to make them truly good, may yet by a fair outſide chance to
e men; ſo that ſuch a principle of acting would rather miniſter to
tentation, than make us ſincerely virtuous. There are many actions,
ich our own reaſon will convince us to be in themſelves very fitting,
ich in ſome times and circumſtances may not be pleaſing to thoſe,
oſe eſteem of us we moſt value: and ſuch as theſe we ſhall very un-
lingly venture on, if our utmoſt aim in doing well is to pleaſe men.
ere are moreover ſeveral acts of charity and devotion to be done in
vate; and theſe men cannot be pleas'd with, becauſe they are indu-
ouſly hidden from them; which therefore are in great danger of being
itted by thoſe, who look not beyond the eſteem of men.

If an endeavour to pleaſe men is the main ſpring of our motion to-
rds good; if their love and eſteem, their applauſe and approbation,
m to us bleſſings of that importance, that we cannot be eaſie or hap-
without them, and therefore incite us ſtrongly to the performance
thoſe good actions, by which they are ſometimes to be attain'd; we
in great danger of being tempted to evil alſo, when the pleaſure of
n, of which we are ſo fond, is no otherways to be procur'd. For
who performs good actions only to pleaſe men, doth not chooſe theſe
they are virtuous, but as they are pleaſing and agreeable; ſo that if
il actions ſhall appear to tend equally, or more, to the end he aims

at, he will be, by this principle, equally or more inclin'd to thoſe. Bu tho' this wrong biaſs on the ſoul ſhould not carry us ſo far, as to com ply with what is confeſſedly and notoriouſly evil; yet it will make u apt to entertain a favourable opinion of all actions, which miniſter t an end we ſo eagerly purſue: it will make us at firſt wiſh them lawfu and at laſt, by eaſie degrees, we ſhall paſs on to eſteem them ſuch.

But after all, the chief and true reaſon why we ſhould not mak the pleaſing of men the ultimate end of our actions, is that which throug out this diſcourſe I have ſo much inſiſted on, becauſe we are requir'd b God to act upon a better and nobler principle. At the laſt day, whe our few good actions ſhall be ſet againſt our numberleſs evil ones, thoſ which were done barely to pleaſe men, ſhall not come into accoun with the former. Actions done to pleaſe men only, can expect no r ward but from men: but if the pleaſing of God be the ſcope of all ou actions, we have a fair proſpect of a recompence from the hands of Go Let us therefore in all things act, *not as men-pleaſers, but as the ſervants of Chriſt, doing the will of God from the heart: with* good wi *doing ſervice, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatſoever good thing any man doth,* upon this good principle, *the ſame* h *ſhall receive of the Lord* in the day of retribution. Epheſ. 6. 6, 7, 8.

SERMON XXX.

The Preeminence of the Goſpel above the Law.

2 Cor. III. 11.

For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

St. *Paul*, in this place, is ſetting forth the dignity of his Apoſtolical office; and in order to excite in the minds of the *Corinthians* a due opinion of it, and a ſuitable veneration for it, he enlarges upon the excellence of that diſpenſation, of which he was, by the grace of God, made a miniſter. He
mpares the Goſpel with the Law; the inſtitution of Chriſt with that
of *Moſes*; the doctrine taught in the New Teſtament with that deli-
ver'd in the Old; the Evangelical Covenant with the Legal: and, upon
fair and impartial compariſon, gives the preference to that diſpenſa-
n, which God himſelf, the Author of both, did in his unerring wiſ-
m plainly prefer.

Were there no other proof of the preeminence of the Goſpel above
Law, but that the Law was aboliſh'd, and the Goſpel ſubſtituted
its room; yet this alone would be an irrefragable argument to
ve the latter diſpenſation ſuperior to the former: for ſince this
nge was made by God himſelf; ſince it is utterly inconſiſtent with
infinite wiſdom of God to change a better inſtitution for a worſe,
even for one not better than the former; ſince it is an eſſential pro-
ty of wiſdom to contrive, that ſuch things as are intended to be
ſt durable, ſhould alſo be moſt perfect in their kind; the legal mi-
ration, which, according to the wiſe decree of God, was deſign'd to
temporary, and which, in purſuance of that deſign, was actually abo-
h'd, muſt neceſſarily in point of its intrinſick worth and value yield
the Evangelical Covenant, which God in his wiſdom intended ſhould
perpetual, and which his goodneſs and power ſhall perpetuate to all

generations. *For if that which is done away was glorious, much m*
that which remaineth is glorious.

FROM which words I ſhall take occaſion to ſhew, wherein it is th
the Religion of Chriſt excells that of *Moſes*; what thoſe diſtinguiſh
privileges are, which the Chriſtian Church enjoys more than did t
Jewiſh; and ſhall from thence infer how much greater obligations
gratitude and obedience lie upon us, than did upon the *Jews*, and
how much ſorer puniſhments we lay our ſelves open, if we neglect th
more plentiful means of ſalvation.

THE Church of God as it now doth, ſo it always did, conſiſt of th
ſincerely pious and true believers, whom God calls and reſcues out
that natural ſtate of ſin and miſery, in which all men are born, to a
pernatural ſtate of grace here, and to the hopes of eternal glory he
after. The natural ſtate of ſin conſiſts in two things; firſt, in the defi
ment of ſin, and the acts that enſue therefrom; and, ſecondly, in the gu
of ſin, and puniſhment due thereunto. The defilement of ſin con
partly in that darkneſs, which hath overſpread our underſtanding
whereby we are groſly ignorant of God, and of our ſelves; partly
the depravation of our wills, and diſorder of our affections, where
we are utterly averſe to that which is good, and ſtrongly inclin'd t
that which is evil, and, by conſequence, obnoxious to the wrath an
curſe of God, and ſubjected to death, both temporal and eternal. Th
is that kingdom of darkneſs and death, of which the devil and his angel
have the dominion, out of which we are by Chriſt tranſlated into a king
dom of light and of happineſs, thro' the belief of, and obedience to, hi
Goſpel. The ſtate of happineſs, to which we are tranſlated by Chriſ
being oppoſite to that ſtate of miſery which hath been deſcrib'd, mu
conſiſt in the abolition of the guilt, and in the purging us from the defile
ment, of ſin. Chriſt takes away the guilt of ſin, by not inflicting pu
niſhment upon us, but transferring it upon himſelf, our ſurety; by
aboliſhing death thro' his own reſurrection, and by tranſlating us to an
happy and eternal life with him in heaven. Chriſt purges us from th
pollution of ſin, by enlightning our underſtandings, and diſſipating th
thick cloud of darkneſs and ignorance, wherewith they were overſpread
by ſanctifying our wills and affections, and by beſtowing on us the i
Epheſ. 4. 22. fluences of his holy Spirit, whereby we are enabled to *put off concer*
23, 24. *ing the former converſation the old man, which is corrupt according t*
the deceitful luſts; *and being renew'd in the ſpirit of our minds, to p*
on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs, and tr
holineſs. From this change of the mind ariſes comfort, peace, and un
ſpeakable joy to thoſe, who, feeling in themſelves the operations o
God's Holy Spirit working in them, and diſpoſing them to acts of ho
lineſs, have a full and entire perſwaſion of God's being propitious an
merciful to them thro' Chriſt, and conſequently a firm and well-grounde
hope of a bleſſed reſurrection to life and glory.

TO this happy ſtate are all call'd, of this ſtate are all made partake
thro' Chriſt, who, from the firſt fall of man, ever have been call'd, an
who, to the laſt conſummation of things, ever ſhall be call'd, to the kno
ledge of God: all therefore in this reſpect are equal; all of ſons of wrat
ſuch as we are by nature, are made ſons of God in Chriſt by adoptio
all are citizens of the ſame city, to wit, the heavenly *Jeruſalem*; all a
admitted into the poſſeſſion of one and the ſame inheritance. There
no dference at all between them, as to the ſubſtance of their ſalvatio
ther

re is the ſame Redeemer of them all, one and the ſame Lord Jeſus
riſt; the ſame price of their redemption, the blood of Chriſt ſhed up-
the croſs. All the difference, which there is betwixt the faithful of
Old and New Teſtament, ariſes from the different diſpenſation of the
ans of ſalvation by God; and the different manner, degree, and mea-
, wherein the faithful were formerly made partakers of that ſalva-
under the Law, and wherein they are now made partakers there-
nder the Goſpel. A great diſparity there is, in theſe reſpects, be-
en the faithful who liv'd before, and thoſe who have liv'd after,
coming of Chriſt into the world. It was not poſſible, that thoſe
liv'd before Chriſt's coming ſhould have ſo clear and diſtinct a know-
e of the means of ſalvation, as had thoſe who liv'd after Chriſt had
ar'd, and had done and ſuffer'd what, in order to our ſalvation, he
to do and ſuffer; becauſe it was one part of the office of our Sa-
r to make known unto men the means of ſalvation; which there-
could not be equally known before the manifeſtation of Chriſt. The
wledge therefore of theſe myſteries was, and neceſſarily muſt be,
e narrow and more obſcure under the Old Teſtament than under
New; and the Chriſtian Church muſt, in this regard, have a great
ntage above the Jewiſh. This is what our Saviour hath expreſly
ht us in thoſe remarkable words to his diſciples, *Mat.* 13. 16, 17.
ſed are your eyes, for they ſee; *and your ears, for they hear*: *for ve-*
ſay unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have deſir'd to
hoſe things which ye ſee, and have not ſeen them; *and to hear thoſe*
s which ye hear, and have not heard them. Which words of our Sa-
are not to be reſtrain'd to the Apoſtles alone, to whom he imme-
y ſpoke them, but do reach to all the faithful, to whom the privileges
mention'd by our Saviour do plainly belong; becauſe to them
it is given in the Goſpel to know thoſe things, which were hidden
many prophets and righteous men, who liv'd before the Goſpel
promulg'd.

1 Pet. 1. 10, 11, 12.

E are by the Apoſtle St. *Peter* reminded of the ſame preroga-
which we under the Goſpel have above thoſe, who liv'd and died
e the preaching of the Goſpel, when he tells us, *Of this ſalva-*
the prophets have enquir'd and ſearch'd diligently, who prophe-
of the grace that ſhould come unto you; *ſearching what, or what*
ner of time the Spirit of Chriſt which was in them did ſignifie,
it teſtified before-hand the ſufferings of Chriſt, and the glory that
d follow: *unto whom it was reveal'd, that not unto themſelves,*
unto us they did miniſter the things, which are now reported unto
by them that have preach'd the Goſpel unto you. By which words
evident, that the revelation, which was made to the Prophets con-
ing *the ſufferings of Chriſt, and the glory that was to follow*, was
ted to them more for our ſakes, than for their own; not that they
o knowledge of thoſe things, which they foretold to others, but
their knowledge was very obſcure in reſpect of ours; as will be
more evident, if we proceed to examine particulars, and to com-
that knowledge, which was to be had from *Moſes* and the Pro-
, with that which is imparted to us by Chriſt and his Apoſtles.

HE things neceſſary to be known by us, in order to ſalvation, are
nature of God and his attributes; the original, and demerit of our
the way of atoning ſin, and the methods of our being juſtified and
ified here in this world, in order to our being glorified in the world

to come. The more or leſs we know of theſe things, the clearer
darker, the more or leſs certain, our knowledge of them is; the grea
or leſs advantage we have towards the attainment of everlaſting ſalv
tion.

Now firſt as to the knowledge of God, his nature, and attribu
that there is a God, that there is but one God, that the only one G
is incorporeal, inviſible, immortal, eternal, omnipotent, omniſcie
of infinite juſtice, wiſdom, and goodneſs, the maker of heaven and ear
the ſupreme Governor of the world and all things therein, and a g
cious rewarder of thoſe that ſeek him, is abſolutely neceſſary to be kno
by all, who would attain eternal life. And it cannot be doubted, b
that the faithful from the beginning of the world had this knowle
of God: but men had not ſo certain, ſo clear, and ſo diſtinct a kno
ledge of theſe things before the coming of Chriſt, as we have now u
der the Goſpel. For, over and above that knowledge of theſe thin
which the pious before *Moſes* had, either from a ſerious contem
tion of the works of God, or from the tradition and inſtruction of the
Patriarchs; and which the *Jews* in ſucceeding ages had from the wr
tings of *Moſes* and the Prophets; we Chriſtians have a more clear, mo
diſtinct, and evident manifeſtation thereof from the books of the Ev
geliſts and Apoſtles. What was obſcurely deliver'd, and hidden und
a vail in the Old Teſtament, is openly diſcover'd, and plac'd in a fu
and clear light by the New.

The doctrine of the ever-bleſſed Trinity may perhaps by learned men
be trac'd, and ſome obſcure footſteps thereof, by great ſagacity, be di
cern'd in the writings of *Moſes* and the Prophets; but it is ſo legibl
written, ſo clearly and plainly expreſs'd, in the writings of the Apoſtl
that there is no need of learning to diſcover its being there taught, tho
a great deal of learning falſly ſo call'd hath been us'd to puzzle, to pe
plex, and, by nice and metaphyſical diſtinctions, to obſcure the truth
there plainly and expreſly deliver'd. The faithful under the *Moſaick*
diſpenſation did, without doubt, believe God to be an inviſible and om-
ni-preſent Spirit: but in the mean time the frequent appearances of Go
ſometimes under one reſemblance, ſometimes under another; ſom
times in one place, and ſometimes in another; the building of an a
tabernacle, and temple, whither God was pleas'd to call his people to-
Deut. 5. 4. gether into his immediate preſence, and to *talk with them*, as *Moſe*
expreſſes it, *face to face*, muſt neceſſarily turn the eyes and minds
that people towards the ark and mercy-ſeat; make them apprehend G
to be as it were ſhut up within the holy of holies, and muſt therefo
perplex, and obſcure their notions of his ſpirituality and his *omni-pr*
ſence. But there is no room for any groſs conceptions of the Dei
1 Tim. 2. 8. now under the Goſpel; when we are not call'd upon to turn our ey
John 4. 24. towards a viſible tabernacle, but to *pray every where*, in any pla
lifting up holy hands; and are taught by Chriſt, that *God is a Spi*
and that *they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in tru*
that *neither Jeruſalem, nor mount Gerizim is the place, where men*
bound *to worſhip the Father; but that the hour is now come, w*
the true worſhippers ſhall worſhip him in ſpirit, and in truth, nei
confining him to one place, nor conceiving of him as viſible and co
poreal.

The believers under the law were perſwaded, that all things w
order'd and govern'd by an all-wiſe and all-powerful Being; and yet
m

enlightned of them were at a loſs to account for the juſtice of di-
providence in ſuffering the wicked to proſper, and the righteous
afflicted: but every common Chriſtian is able to ſolve this diffi-
by the help of what he hath learn'd from the Goſpel, concerning
etributions of a future ſtate, and can apply to all ſuch caſes the re-
ons made by *Abraham* on the rich man's deſire of relief from *La-* Luk. 16.25.
in a ſtate of torment; *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time*
edſt thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things; but now
comforted, and thou art tormented. And as the knowledge which
ews had of the juſtice of God's providence was leſs clear, than that
we Chriſtians have thereof; ſo alſo were their notions of the ve-
of God in fulfilling his promiſes: for the promiſes of worldly
neſs could neither ſatisfie their minds when made, nor were they
s made good unto them, nor were their expectations, built on thoſe
iſes, always anſwer'd by the event; and the fruition of eternal life
glory after the reſurrection, which is the main hope and ſupport
Chriſtian under the ſevereſt trials, was but faintly diſcover'd, or
ſt but obſcurely apprehended, under the Law.

us doth it appear, that the knowledge which the *Jews* had of
ature and attributes of God, was very ſhort of ours; ſo that the
ation made to them ſeems to bear much the ſame proportion to
which is made to us, as that light, which is now imparted to us
this ſtate of mortality, doth to that greater light which we ſhall
, when tranſlated into a ſtate of glory, and of actual viſion. And
aul might have ſaid with reference to the different ages of the
h, what he ſaith in alluſion to the different ages of man, and in
d to the different manifeſtations of God in this world, and in that
ch is to come; *When I was a child, I ſpake as a child, I un-* 1 Cor. 13.11.
ſtood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I
away childiſh things.

we were in that ſtate of uprightneſs, in which man was at firſt
ed by God, then it would be ſufficient, in order to our happineſs,
ow the nature of God, and the works of creation and providence,
o love, honour, and worſhip him, according to the meaſures of
knowledge. But in the ſtate of ſin, into which we are now faln
the tranſgreſſion of our firſt parents, it is neceſſary that we ſhould
be acquainted with the origine, the nature, and the demerits of
and of theſe things alſo we have a much clearer manifeſtation un-
he Goſpel, than the *Jews* had under the Law. When we read in
es, that the wickedneſs of man was great in the earth, and that Gen. 6.5.
imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually;
hen we hear *David* confeſſing, that he *was born in ſin, and con-* Pſal. 51.5.
d in wickedneſs, we may doubt whether what is in both places re-
n'd to ſome men, is to be extended to all the race of mankind; and
ther ſuch expreſſions amount to a plain and full proof of the gene-
depravation of human nature: but all ſuch doubts muſt be ſilenc'd
he plain aſſertions in the New Teſtament, that *by one man ſin en-* Rom. 5.12.
into the world, and death by ſin; that *ſin reigneth in us, and* 6.12.
lleth in our mortal bodies; that *by the offence of one judgment* 5.18.
upon all men to condemnation; that *all who are of the race of*
kind are ſinners, ungodly, enemies of God, dead in treſpaſſes and Epheſ. 2.1.
ſervants of ſin and corruption; *children of the devil, and by na-* v.3.
children of wrath; that *when they would do good, evil is preſent* Rom. 7.21.

Rom. 7. 23. *with them*; and that *they find a law in their members warring ag*
the law of their mind, and bringing it into captivity to the law of
that *this is the ſtate of ſin, in which men are born*; and that th
2 Theſſ. 1. 9. *who live and die in this ſtate, ſhall be puniſh'd with everlaſting*
ſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his po
and ſhall be caſt into a lake of fire and brimſtone, where their puniſhm
Rev. 14. 11. *ſhall be without end, and without intermiſſion, for they ſhall be*
mented for ever and ever, and ſhall have no reſt day or night.

AND as the Goſpel gives us a more diſtinct account of the orig
and demerit of ſin, than the Law doth; ſo alſo doth it furniſh us
a brighter diſcovery of the methods, whereby the guilt of it is ato
And indeed it would be no way to our advantage, but rather to
great diſadvantage, to be inform'd ſo fully of the malignity and da
of our diſeaſe, if we were not alſo inſtructed by what remedies it i
be cur'd. If God were not rigorouſly juſt; if his anger and indign
againſt ſin were not neceſſary; if ſin were ſo indifferent to him, th
could be either diſpleas'd or not diſpleas'd with it, puniſh, or no
niſh it, without any impeachment of his juſtice, wiſdom, or holin
he might then arbitrarily forgive it without any expiation. But
cauſe the juſtice of God is ſuch, that he cannot but be angry with
and puniſh it according to its demerit, we can have no aſſurance of
forgiveneſs of ſins without an atonement; and our aſſurance of pard
will be the greater or leſs, according to the greater or leſs knowled
we have of the nature and ſufficiency of that atonement. Thoſe, wh
liv'd under the *Moſaick* diſpenſation, were ſav'd by the ſame means
redemption, as we who live under the Evangelical; but the myſte
of our common redemption was not ſo fully manifeſted to them, a
is to us. When the expiation of ſin was actually made by Chriſt up
the croſs, when all things were finiſh'd by him, which were neceſſ
for the accompliſhing the great work of our ſalvation; then it was p
per that a clear, open, full, accurate, diſtinct revelation of theſe thing
ſhould be made to mankind. When Chriſt was ſent into the world b
his Father to redeem the world, it was highly proper that he ſhou
open his commiſſion; that he ſhould inſtruct thoſe to whom he w
ſent, who he was, from whom he came, for what end he came, a
by what means he was to bring about that end. When the only
gotten Son, which is in the boſom of the Father, came down from
Father to declare his will, men might reaſonably expect, that ſuch
declaration ſhould be both authentick and perfect. And after Chr
was receiv'd up again into heaven, it became his Apoſtles to expl
theſe things yet more clearly, fully, and explicitely to thoſe, to whom
they were ſent, that they might be thoroughly acquainted with the e
tent of that ſalvation, which Chriſt had wrought; and the value of th
purchaſe, which he had made; in order to excite in them a more p
fect hatred of their ſins, and a more lively ſenſe of the mercy of G
thro' Jeſus Chriſt.

SUCH a manifeſtation as this of the myſtery of our redemption w
proper, after it was actually wrought; but ſo clear and full a kno
ledge of it was neither neceſſary, nor expedient, before it was effec
Expedient it was, that what Chriſt was to do and ſuffer for us ſho
in general terms be foretold, that when it came to paſs it might
more firmly be believ'd; but it would have been improper and i
pedient, that all the particulars of our Saviour's ſufferings ſhould b

n as punctually foretold by the Prophets, as they are related by the
angeliſts, leſt ſuch a prediction ſhould have hindred the accompliſh-
nt of them. It is not probable, that either *Pilate* or the *Jews* would
e deſign'd againſt Chriſt what they did, and what the determinate
nſel and foreknowledge of God had preordain'd ſhould be done by
m, if all the circumſtances of Chriſt's paſſion, and the end of his
erings, had been as explicitely deliver'd in the writings of the Pro-
s, which were then in the hands of the *Jews*, as they are now in
writings of the Apoſtles. The nearer perſons were to that time,
n *the ſun of righteouſneſs aroſe with healing in his wings*, the more
ctly muſt they be ſhone upon by that *light, which lighteth every*
that cometh into the world. For tho' the New Teſtament is al-
t wholly comprehended in the books of the Old, yet are thoſe my-
es written as it were in hieroglyphicks in the one, which are diſ-
'd in plain and intelligible words in the other: all the books of the
phets are like that in the Revelation, in which many things were
tten worthy to be read and known, but then it was *ſeal'd* with
y ſeals, ſo that *no one was* able *to open* all the ſecrets of *the book,*
he Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, did prevail to Rev. 5. 5.
the book, and to looſe the ſeals thereof. Hence it is, that the
ſtle St. *Peter* compares the writings of the Prophets *to a light,* to 2 Pet. 1. 19.
ndle as the original hath it, *ſhining in a dark place*; but the revela-
which was made by Chriſt in the Goſpel to *the day-dawn, and*
day-ſtar ariſing in our hearts. The revelation made to the *Jews*
o them a light, but a faint one; it ſhone, but in a dark place; the
ity, life, and death of Chriſt; his regal, prophetical, and prieſtly
e; the remiſſion of our ſins thro' his blood, the ſanctification of
hearts by his Spirit, the glories of the world to come, were taught
, not in words at length, but in figures; and a dark *veil* was over
writings as well as over the *face* of *Moſes, ſo that the children of* 2 Cor. 3. 7.
l could not ſtedfaſtly behold his doctrine, any more than they could
ountenance. They were ſav'd, as well as we, by the blood of Chriſt;
there was as great a difference between their knowledge of the my-
of our redemption by the ſacrifice of the death of Chriſt, and ours,
ere was between that dark cloud, wherewith God led that people
ne time, and that pillar of light, wherewith he guided them at an-
er.

ND as we Chriſtians have clearer notions of the expiation of ſin than
the *Jews*; ſo by conſequence muſt our aſſurances of our being ju-
ed, or having our ſins pardon'd, be ſtronger than were theirs. Re-
ous perſons, who liv'd before the coming of Chriſt, knew that they
e ſinners, and that they therefore had need of the favour and mer-
of God for the remiſſion of their ſins. This mercy they probably
ected from that promis'd Seed, who was to bruiſe the ſerpent's head;
as hath been obſerv'd, they were but ſuperficially inſtructed in the
hods, by which this promiſe was to be fulfill'd. Hence they muſt
eſſarily groan ſorely under the weight of their ſins; ſevere curſes
e denounc'd in the Law againſt all who ſhould tranſgreſs it; theſe
es were plain and eaſie to be underſtood, but the promiſes of par-
thro' the merits of a Saviour, were more intricate and involv'd;
n therefore the danger, which threatned them, was ſo apparent, and
methods of their eſcape were ſo obſcurely notified to them, it is no
nder, if their fears did very much over-balance their hopes. Hence

is

is it, that the ſpirit by which they were govern'd, is, in the Goſpel
repreſented as a ſpirit of bondage; but the ſpirit, by which we Chr
ſtians are influenc'd, as a Spirit of adoption. *Ye have not now,* fai
St. *Paul, Rom.* 8. v. 15. *receiv'd the ſpirit of bondage again unto* fea
again, that is, as before under the Law; *but ye have receiv'd the* Spi
of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father; that is, whereby we are
well aſſur'd of the love of God, as a child is of the affection of an
dulgent father; as ſurely intitled to the joys of heaven, as an adop
ſon is to the inheritance of him, who therefore adopted him, that
might make him his heir. For thus the Apoſtle goes on in that pl
v. 16. to ſhew the privileges of the Chriſtian; *the Spirit it ſelf beareth wit*
with our ſpirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, th
heirs; heirs of God, and joynt-heirs with Chriſt. Such as is the in
ritance of Chriſt, ſuch alſo is ours, for *we are joynt-heirs with him;*
are as ſure we ſhall be heirs, as that we are children; one privilege
the neceſſary conſequence of the other, *if children, then heirs*; and
we may have no doubt of our being children, we have not only
teſtimony of our own conſciences, that we are ſo, which may be
ceiv'd, and which may deceive us; but the infallible teſtimony of G
Spirit, which cannot be miſtaken, and which, if we duly attend to
will not lead us into any miſtake.

AND as the aſſurances given to us of this inheritance are greater th
were afforded to the *Jews*; ſo, laſtly, is the inheritance it ſelf much mor
plainly reveal'd to us in the Goſpel, than it was to the *Jews* under the
Law. Whatever could be learn'd of a future ſtate from the light of re
ſon, that, and much more, was known to the *Jews*: what by reaſon
by revelation was made known to the *Jews* concerning immortal li
that, and much more, is manifeſted to us Chriſtians. The texts, in whi
a future ſtate is reveal'd to the *Jews* are few, and here and there thi
ly ſcatter'd in ſome books of the Old Teſtament: but there is no on
book, ſcarce one chapter, in which this doctrine is not taught in the
New. Thoſe in the Old Teſtament are not ſo clear of ambiguity, but tha
they are capable of another interpretation, and are actually interpret
of temporal promiſes even by ſome learned and ſome pious Chriſtian
thoſe in the New are ſo clear, that there is no room for the leaſt lear
to miſapprehend them, or for the moſt impious to pervert them. I
immortal life doth not ſeem to be more clearly aſſerted in ſome p
ſages of the Old Teſtament, than it doth to be denied in ſome othe
Scepticks can, not only oppoſe the authority of one writer to that
another, but the ſame writer delivers things which, at firſt view, may ſee
inconſiſtent one with the other: but as a future ſtate of happineſs an
miſery is ſupported by many more texts in the Goſpel, and thoſe muc
more clear, than in the Law; ſo can it not be pretended, that it is an
where impugn'd by any ſuſpicious paſſage throughout the New Teſ
ment. It is therefore with great juſtice that the Author of the E
ſtle to the *Hebrews*, than whom no one was better vers'd in the *Jew*
law, and who hath by his explications of it ſhewn much more to
couch'd under it than is generally underſtood by it, hath obſerv'd, th
Hebr. 10. 1. *the law had only a ſhadow of good things to come, but not the*
image of the things; that is, it did but obſcurely and faintly typifie th
glories of heaven; not give us ſo bright an image, and ſo lively a rep
ſentation of the rewards of another world, as is pictur'd out to us, and
all its full proportion and lineaments accurately deſcrib'd, in the Goſpe

TH

HUS have I given you a ſummary account of ſome of thoſe great
ntages, which we enjoy under the diſpenſation of the Goſpel, above
which were held forth to the *Jews* under the Oeconomy of *Mo-*
Great reaſon we have to thank God for theſe glorious privileges:
is the mercy intended us by the divine goodneſs in ſending his
beloved Son into the world, and beſtowing on us ſuch extraordi-
meaſures of knowledge and grace. If the *Jews* had reaſon to va-
eir condition in compariſon with the Gentiles; if the Pſalmiſt ren-
his moſt devout thankſgivings to God, *who ſhew'd his word unto* Pſal. 146. 19.
, *his ſtatutes and his judgments unto Iſrael*; if he could truly af-
that *God had not dealt ſo with any nation*; how much greater v. 20.
have we devoutly to acknowledge the divine mercy, in ſhew-
is Word to us more clearly than he did to *Jacob,* in giving to
ore perfect ſtatutes and judgments than he did to *Iſrael,* and
aling with us more graciouſly than he did even with that his fa-
ite and peculiar people? To the queſtion ask'd by Moſes, *what na-* Deut. 4. 8.
is there ſo great, that hath ſtatutes and judgments ſo righteous as
is law, which I ſet before you this day, we may without vain
ing anſwer, that we are that nation; that the ſtatutes and judgments
t us in the Goſpel of Chriſt are ſtill more righteous and holy, than
aw which *Moſes* ſet before that people. But in vain is this great
ſpread forth from heaven, if we obſtinately ſhut our eyes againſt
ight; in vain are the nature of God, and the glorious attributes of
ajeſty ſo manifeſtly diſcover'd to us, if we do not take care, that
ove, our fear, our reverence of God, do bear a proportion to the
nowledge we have of his goodneſs, his juſtice, and his infinite per-
ions. In vain are we thoroughly acquainted with the heinouſneſs of
, and the ſevere vengeance to which it expoſes us, if we do not take
care, by a timely and ſincere repentance, to avert thoſe inſupporta-
orments, which are treaſur'd up againſt the day of wrath, to be then
ted on obſtinate and incorrigible ſinners. In vain are we ſo fully in-
ted in the myſtery of our redemption by the death of Chriſt, if we
ot take care, by an entire obedience to the precepts of the Goſpel,
cure to our ſelves a part in that redemption. In vain are we able
ace all the ſteps by which we are to arrive at ſalvation, and vers'd
e abſtruſe points of regeneration, juſtification, and ſanctification,
do not uſe our utmoſt *diligence to make our own calling ſure,* and 2 Pet. 1. 10.
of the number of thoſe, *who are waſh'd, who are ſanctified, who* 1 Cor. 6. 11.
juſtified in the name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of our
. In vain, finally, are life and immortality plac'd in ſo clear a light
he Goſpel, if we do not *by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek* Rom. 2. 7.
lory, and honour, and immortality.

SERMON XXX

The neceſſary connection between the lo of God, and of our Brother.

1 JOHN IV. 21.

And this commandment have we from him, that he who lovet *God, love his brother alſo.*

ST. *JOHN*, the Author of this Epiſtle, as he had the m fervent and tender love for his Maſter, and is therefore, in diſtinguiſhing manner, ſaid to have been belov'd by him; does he, throughout his writings, moſt frequently and moſt e neſtly inſiſt upon the obligations we are under to this gr duty of love; of love to God, and to one another. He himſelf is John 19. 26. markably ſtyl'd *the diſciple whom Jeſus loved*: and love, we find, is ſubject upon which, both in this and in his other Epiſtles, he deli to dwell. The exceeding riches of God's love to us are often urg'd this Apoſtle, as a prevailing motive to engage ours to him; and t we might not be at a loſs how to diſcharge ſo neceſſary a duty, he p ticularly inſtructs us in the moſt proper ways and methods of expreſſi and ſhewing forth this love. One principal way of manifeſting the ſen we have of God's love is, he informs us, by being kind and charitab 1 John 4. 11. to our brethren: *Beloved*, ſays he, *if God ſo loved us, we* ought alſo *love one another.*

THE whole compaſs of religion had been compriz'd by our Savio under the two great duties of loving God, and loving our neighbo Matt. 22. 40. *on theſe two commandments*, ſays he, *hang all the law and the* prophe To ſhew us the neceſſary dependance that theſe two commandme have, the one upon the other; to demonſtrate the inſeparable connecti that there is between them; and to expoſe the ſin and folly of end vouring to put aſunder thoſe duties, which our Lord had here joy together, is the main ſcope and deſign of the Apoſtle in the text: A *this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God,* love *brother alſo.*

Ou

UR indiſpenſable obligation to love God St. *John* had before evi-
ly prov'd, from the many tranſcendent inſtances of God's love to
Herein, ſays the Apoſtle, *is love; not that we lov'd God, but that* 1 John 4.10.
lov'd us; and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our ſins. But
iſcover a very feeble and languid ſenſe of this love of Chriſt to us,
are not thereby engag'd to perform all the acts of brotherly love
harity to one another. In the death and paſſion of Chriſt we have
nconceivable inſtance of his love to us: and that this his love might
be forgotten by us; that the ſenſe of it might always remain freſh
our minds, he hath been pleas'd to inſtitute the holy Sacrament
s ſupper, for a memorial of his death, and as a pledge of his love.
even this love of Chriſt in dying for us will yet be of no uſe or ad-
ge to us, except the ſame love, which was in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord,
und in us alſo. We ſhall have no grounds to expect the fruits
s his love, in the participation of his holy ſupper, unleſs we our
s tranſcribe and imitate the unparallel'd love we there commemo-
Without an exemplary degree of this love to our brethren, we
nfit to be Chriſt's diſciples, and unworthy to be admitted to his
; we have no right or title to the promiſes of the Goſpel; we have
eaſon to hope, that theſe promiſes ſhall be confirm'd to us in the
ment; in a word, we can neither be good Chriſtians, nor good
municants.

ROM theſe conſiderations, if we will duly attend to them, we ſhall
bundantly convinc'd of the neceſſity of this duty; and from theſe
fore I ſhall endeavour to enforce it.

ND *firſt,* we who love God, muſt love our brother alſo, becauſe
cannot otherwiſe be good Chriſtians.

THE moſt lively, the moſt certain, the moſt acceptable expreſſion
ur love to God, is the due diſcharge of thoſe ſeveral duties he hath
upon us. *This is the love of God,* ſays the Apoſtle, *that we keep*
ommandments. Now love to our brethren is commanded by the
authority, enforc'd by the ſame ſanctions, recommended by the
motives, and tends to the ſame end, as our love of God. The
power is contemn'd, the ſame penalties are incurr'd, the ſame end
eated, by him who hates his fellow-creatures, as by him who hates
Creator. And we do in vain therefore pretend to love God, whilſt,
ur uncharitableneſs to men, we violate his laws, deſpiſe his threat-
s, contemn his authority, and renounce his government. It is the
uliar honour of the Chriſtian religion, that the duties which men
to one another; the obligations they are under to be juſt and faith-
kind and courteous, merciful and compaſſionate, charitable and be-
cent to each other, are there clearly reveal'd, and by the moſt power-
motives preſs'd upon our conſciences. And if, therefore, we have
regard to the honour of our religion; if we would be an ornament
our moſt holy profeſſion; nay, if we would be of the number of its
e members; we muſt, as the Apoſtle adviſes, *be knit together in love,* Coloſſ. 2. 2.
muſt increaſe and abound in love one towards another. 1 Theſſ. 3.12.

HE regular performance of this duty is the main thing, by which
are diſtinguiſh'd from other men; and the ſure teſt, by which we
ſelves may know, that we are ſo diſtinguiſh'd. *By this,* ſays our John 13.35.
rd, *ſhall men know that ye are my diſciples, if you have love one to*
other: and *hereby,* ſays St. *John, we know that we have paſs'd from* 1 John 3.14.
ath unto life, becauſe we love the brethren. The want of this love

is, in the holy Scripture, made the mark and character of an unre
nerate man; a ſure proof that he is in a ſtate of ſin, and obnoxiou
eternal puniſhment: *He that loveth not his brother*, ſays St. J
knoweth not God; *is a murderer, and abideth in death*. How m
pains ſoever he may have taken in the performance of other duties;
he be never ſo much aſſur'd of his faith, his piety, his devotion;
if he love not his brother, he is by this Apoſtle excluded from b
one of the children of God, and number'd among thoſe of the D
The neglect of this duty does not only defeat him of the reward of
other performances, but proves likewiſe, that thoſe very performan
were imperfect, defective, and unſincere. For had he perform'd th
actions out of a ſincere deſire to pleaſe God, he would not have allow'd h
ſelf in any other actions, which he could not but know would prov
God's diſpleaſure: had he lov'd God upon thoſe principles, and in t
manner, which the Goſpel requires, he could not poſſibly have g
way to any hatred and malice againſt men, *who are made after the*
of God. And this St. *John* teaches us expreſly in the verſe befor
1 John 4. 20. text: *If a man ſay, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a l*
for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he l
God whom he hath not ſeen? If a man hateth his brother, whom
hath ſo many preſent, ſenſible, viſible motives to love, it is ſcarce
be expected, that he will be at the expence of thought, reflection, an
meditation, to work himſelf up to the moſt ardent love of that *Being*,
whom he hath not ſeen, nor can ſee. It is true indeed, that thoſe who are
very deficient in their love to men; they who are very remarkable fo
their judging, condemning, reviling, injuring, and hating their brethren
do yet at the ſame time make the higheſt pretenſions to the love of God
value themſelves moſt, and talk ofteneſt of their knowledge of Chriſt
of their familiarity, of their intimacy, of their oneneſs with him. Bu
however ſuch men may deceive others, or be deceiv'd themſelves
the Apoſtle is bold to tell them, that *they are liars*; that *they are of*
their father the devil, and that the truth is not in them. For if they
did really and ſincerely love their Saviour, this very affection would e
gage them to love their brethren, tho' this duty had been no where p
ſitively and expreſly commanded them.

WE all know, that men naturally and of courſe imitate the actio
of thoſe they love. Now the whole life of our Saviour was made u
of charity, kindneſs, and beneficence to men; and can any one ther
fore be truly ſaid to love Chriſt, who is uncharitable, cruel, and in
jurious to thoſe, to whom our Lord was compaſſionate, merciful, and
gracious; for whoſe ſake he endur'd a wretched and miſerable life, and
ſubmitted to a painful and ignominious death? It is generally eſteem
an impeachment of our love to our friend, if we hate, moleſt, and in
jure thoſe, to whom he hath ſhewn ſome particular mark of reſpect an
kindneſs; and yet there may be often ſome colour for ſuch a conduc
even in the moſt perfect friendſhips of this world: our friends, the v
ry beſt and wiſeſt of them, are frail and fallible; they may have a goo
opinion of thoſe men, whoſe character and deſigns we may know to b
beyond ſuſpicion, bad: and therefore, tho' we are not at liberty to ha
or injure any one; yet we may warrantably deny to ſuch men tho
particular marks of a ſpecial eſteem, approbation, and encouragemen
which our miſtaken friend may think he hath reaſon to expect from us
But nothing of this nature can poſſibly be pleaded in the caſe before us

Our

Lord, who could not be deceiv'd, is ſaid to have lov'd, and to have for all men; and all men, therefore, muſt have ſomewhat in them, h was the proper object of his love; and may, for that reaſon, of right nd ours. All men are partakers of God's love, and 'tis from his neſs alone that they *live, move, and have their being.* Now if is pleas'd to vouchſafe ſome ſhare of his love to all, can we think any are unworthy of ours? Can we have the preſumption to imagine that our love is too great a favour to be beſtow'd on thoſe, to n the Almighty does not refuſe his?. Our bleſſed Saviour, we read, *himſelf a ranſom for all,* being willing that none ſhould periſh, but 1 Tim. 2. 6. *all ſhould come to the knowledge of the truth.* v. 4.

Now our Lord's love to us is the rule, the ſtandard, and meaſure of ours to one another: and therefore, as our Lord's love was manifeſted to all men; ſo ours alſo muſt be equally extenſive, if we would be followers of him, if we would be partakers of his favour. If we our ſincerely love our great Lord and Maſter, we muſt of neceſſity love thoſe whom he loves. We may, indeed, have all due regard and value for an earthly benefactor, and yet may find great difficulty in bringing our ſelves to entertain the ſame kind thoughts, and to have ſame good intentions for others, that he hath. We may apprehend that our intereſt, and that of thoſe whom he now values equally with us, may ſome time or other interfere: and may therefore be inclin'd to treat them, rather as our own rivals and competitors, than as the dependants and favourites of our common friend; but he, who would bring himſelf to be kind to men, on the account of that grace and favour which his Lord hath ſhewn them, hath none of theſe temptations to damp and allay his love. The good we expect from Chriſt will not be the leſs, but the greater, for our having others to ſhare it with us: our Lord's power is ſufficient to ſatisfie all our deſires; and greater kindneſs we ſhew to others, the more we ſhall undoubtedly receive from him. If, therefore, we would be Chriſtians, *not in word, in tongue, but in deed, and in truth*; if we would have it thought others, if we would be aſſur'd our ſelves, that we are of this number; if we would obey the commands, or imitate the example, of Chriſt; if we would direct and regulate our love, by thoſe meaſures, and in that manner, by which our Lord was pleas'd to expreſs his; we ſhall n certainly be convinc'd, *that he who loveth God,* he who loveth Saviour, muſt neceſſarily *love his brother* alſo.

ND this will appear yet farther, if we conſider the obligations we under to this duty, not only as we are Chriſtians, but as we are, t I hope we all at the approaching feſtival intend to be, Communts.

HE relation men bear to one another, is uſually both the founda-, and the meaſure of their love; and the nearer, or the more di- that relation is, the greater, or the leſs, is the affection between perſons ſo related. Now, as the union that is between Chriſtians e cloſeſt and the ſtricteſt, that can poſſibly be imagin'd; ſo is this n moſt expreſsly and particularly confirm'd and renew'd in our re-ion of the Lord's ſupper. The union that is between the different s and members of the ſame body, is the neareſt and the moſt inti-e, that can be found in nature. And by this St. *Paul* chuſes to re-ſent and illuſtrate the union that is between Chriſtians: and of this on we are, in a ſtill more eſpecial manner, made partakers in the y ſacrament. Chriſt and the Church are repreſented by St. *Paul* as one myſtical body; our Lord, as the head that governs it; his holy Spirit, as the ſoul that enlivens it; and the faithful, as its parts and members that are govern'd by this Head, and quicken'd by this Spirit. In Epheſ. 4. 25. this ſenſe St. *Paul* tells us that *we are members one of another*: and by a worthy participation of the ſacrament we are aſſur'd, that we are thus united to Chriſt, and to one another, and that, as our Church expreſſes it, "we are very members incorporate of the myſtical body of our Lord, "which is the bleſſed company of all faithful people.

Now, if we are thus nearly, thus cloſely, thus intimately united, is it not reaſonable, that the greatneſs of our love to one another ſhould bear ſome proportion to the nearneſs of our relation to each other? Is it not highly fit and becoming, that the members of this myſtical body ſhould have the ſame care one of another? *If one member ſuffer, ought not all the members to ſuffer with it? If one member be honour'd, ſhould not all the members rejoyce with it?* We are all govern'd by the ſame laws, we are children of the ſame Father, diſciples of the ſame Maſter, ſubjects of the ſame King, heirs of the ſame kingdom; we are all admitted to the ſame table, we all eat of the ſame bread, and drink of the ſame cup, we all feaſt on the ſame heavenly food, our bodies are all made clean by the ſame body of Chriſt, our ſouls are all waſh'd by his moſt precious blood: and is it not therefore highly unbecoming us, that there ſhould be any diſcords or diviſions in a body thus united; that there ſhould be any differences, any ill-will or hatred between thoſe, who are thus knit together, by all the ſtrongeſt, all the moſt engaging endearing ties imaginable?

The more things any men agree in, the greater degrees of love we may generally obſerve to be between them. Thoſe things, in which Chriſtians and Communicants agree, are, we have ſeen, many, and of the utmoſt importance; and their love, therefore, ſhould be in ſome meaſure ſuitable to thoſe principles, upon which it is founded, and to Ecclus. 13. 16. thoſe many powerful motives, by which it is enforc'd. *All fleſh*, ſays the wiſe man, *conſorteth according to kind, and a man will cleave to his like.* Men uſually beſtow moſt of their kindneſs upon thoſe who moſt reſemble them, and their affection is chiefly laid out upon ſuch as are joyn'd with them in the ſame intereſt, employ'd in the ſame buſineſs, or engag'd in the ſame diverſions. Now all, who name the name of Chriſt are buſied in the purſuit of the ſame happineſs; all, who come to his table, are agreed in the ſame methods of purſuing it: and their affections, therefore, ſhould be as much united to one another, as are their intereſts, their deſigns, and aims. They are all going to the ſame place, they all partake of the ſame heavenly nouriſhment, to ſupport and ſtrengthen them in their paſſage, and ſhould therefore carefully Gen. 45. 24. obſerve *Joſeph*'s advice to his brethen, and *ſee, that they fall not out by the way.* Whilſt we are thus united to one another; whilſt we are thus members of the ſame body, grieving at each other's hurt, and rejoycing at each other's good, ſelf-love, as well as charity, will oblige us to acts of kindneſs and beneficence to all: and the ſame inclination, that puts us upon ſeeking our own good, will engage us likewiſe to contribute, what in us lies, to that good of our brethren, in which our own is ſo nearly concern'd, and with which it is ſo ſtrongly interwoven. No differences of opinion, of circumſtances, of worldly intereſts, can divide thoſe, who are thus firmly united to their Lord, and to one another. *Neither life, nor death, neither things preſent, nor things to come, neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall be able* *to ſeparate them from the love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus their Lord*, from that love of the brethren, which is rooted and grounded upon this their love of God. 'Tis true indeed, the faithful are not thus ſtrictly united either to the wicked Chriſtian, or to the unworthy Communicant. But ſome relation there is, even between the beſt and the worſt of men; and the moſt inveterate either of our own, or of God's enemies have enough in them, to juſtifie, to challenge, to command, our love. We are all partakers of the ſame common nature: it is by this kind of reſemblance, that *every beaſt*, as the wiſe man obſerves, *loveth his like*; and on the ſame account, as he afterwards intimates, 'tis equally reaſonable, that *every man ſhould love his neighbour*. Ecclus. 13. 15.

All men are the work of God's hands, they are all made after the image of God. And can we pretend, therefore, truly to love God, whilſt we have no regard to that image of his, which is ſo viſibly, in ſo diſtinguiſhing a manner, impreſs'd upon men? 'Tis on the account of this likeneſs to our Creator, that the murderer of his brethren, is ſo ſeverely threatned by God: for ſo we are expreſsly told; *Geneſis* 9. v. 6. *Whoſo ſheddeth man's blood, by man ſhall his blood be ſhed: for in the image of God made he man.* And as men are all made after the likeneſs of God, ſo are they all partakers of his loving-kindneſs and mercy; he hath given them all a rational, immaterial, immortal ſoul, capable of knowing, of loving, of enjoying God: he hath ſhewn them the way to happineſs, and hath invited, beſought, encourag'd them to walk in it: he hath call'd all ſinners to repentance, and does, with wonderful patience and long-ſuffering, wait for their amendment. The precious blood of the Son of God was ſhed for them, and the powerful aſſiſtances of the holy Spirit are, thro' his mercy, tender'd to them: and it muſt therefore be the height of ingratitude, arrogance, and preſumption in us, to pretend that we can find nothing worthy of our love in thoſe men, to whom God hath been pleas'd to offer, upon whom he is ready to beſtow, ſuch unſpeakable privileges and rewards. The ſenſe of Chriſt's love to men, is by St. *Paul* urg'd as a reaſon, why we ſhould not grieve or offend them by the unſeaſonable uſe of our Chriſtian liberty: *Deſtroy not*, ſays the Apoſtle, *him with thy meat, for whom Chriſt died.* Rom. 14. 15. And the ſame conſideration is of equal force to oblige us to love our neighbours, tho' we cannot be aſſur'd that they are of the number of the faithful; for, whatever they are, *Chriſt died for them*; and we cannot therefore be at too great pains to ſhew our compaſſion, our kindneſs, our love to them.

This charitable and merciful diſpoſition of mind, as it ought at all times to be found in us; ſo is it then moſt eſpecially requir'd of us, when, in the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, we contemplate and commemorate this love of Chriſt in dying for us. 'Tis a powerful argument of the exceeding riches of the love of Chriſt, that, *whilſt we were yet ſinners, he died for us, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us unto God.* Rom. 5. 8. 1 Pet. 3. 18. The conſideration of our own manifold ſins and tranſgreſſions is the great motive, that excites, quickens, and inflames the ſenſe we have of Chriſt's love to us. And can we then, at ſuch a time, delight to dwell upon the ſins of men, and withdraw our love from them, on account of thoſe ſins? Do we think our brother hath no reaſon to expect our love, becauſe he hath offended us? And have not we our ſelves, in a more provoking manner, offended that God, whoſe love we there remember, whoſe love we there implore? Nay, do we not, by this our uncharitableneſs, even now offend him, who hath commanded

Matth. 5. 44. us *to love our enemies, to bleſs thoſe that curſe us, to pray for thoſe that deſpitefully uſe us, and perſecute us*? This, we read, was the practice of the holy Jeſus, both in his life, and at his death: *And is the diſciple greater than his Lord? Is the ſervant greater than his maſter? Is it not enough, if the diſciple be as his Lord, if the ſervant be as his maſter?* If then we would be meet partakers of the holy ſacrament, we muſt take care, that *the ſame mind*, the ſame kind, tender, charitable mind, *be in us, which was in our bleſſed Lord* and Saviour. The holy Euchariſt is a feaſt of charity, and thoſe only are worthy to be admitted there, who, whilſt they meditate upon the love of their Lord, go themſelves and do likewiſe.

THERE have been, and ſtill are, warm diſputes between the *Latin* and *Greek* Churches, whether the Sacrament ſhould be adminiſtred with leaven'd, or unleaven'd bread. Now which way ſoever this queſtion is determin'd, and it is perhaps of no great moment which way it is determin'd, it is agreed that there is a ferment, which is certainly unſuitable to the celebration of this feaſt. 1 Cor. 5. 7,8. *Chriſt our paſſover is ſacrific'd for us; therefore we are to keep the feaſt, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedneſs, but with the unleaven'd bread of* charity and loving-kindneſs. He who preſumes to approach to the holy Table with the guilt of uncharitableneſs upon him, as he comes uninvited, ſo will he depart unſatisfied and unrewarded. For how unfit muſt he be to taſt the love of God in the ſacrament, who is himſelf full of envy and malice, and is wholly taken up, in contriving ways and means to execute his revenge, rage, and fury? What pleaſure can he take in meditating upon God's mercy in the redemption of man, whilſt he abounds with hatred, enmity, and ill-will againſt thoſe, for whom that redemption was wrought? The merciful are always moſt feelingly affected with the ſenſe of mercy; and we our ſelves muſt be fill'd with love, before we can truly reliſh or ſufficiently value the love of Jeſus. An angry man hath no taſt of this love; a revengeful man intermedleth not with ſuch joy.

THE greater and the more unfeign'd our affection for men is, the more inflam'd will be our gratitude to God, the more thankfully ſhall we commemorate the love of Chriſt in dying for them. We have uſually a deep ſenſe of the obligations we are under to any one, who hath been particularly kind to any of our friends; we think our ſelves under no concern to acknowledge the favours, that are beſtow'd upon thoſe we are ſtrangers to, and in whoſe good or ill fortune we are equally indifferent: but the diſtinctions and advantages that are given to our enemies, are ſo far from heightning our eſteem and gratitude towards thoſe who gave them, that they much oftener occaſion our anger, and produce our hatred. Now, in the holy ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, the general and diffuſive love of God to all mankind is repreſented to us, and ſhould, with devout and thankful hearts, be acknowledg'd by us. But we ſhall be in a very unſuitable diſpoſition to offer up the well-pleaſing ſacrifice of praiſe and thankſgiving to God, for the mercies he hath beſtow'd on men, if, inſtead of an unfeign'd, diſintereſted love to them, we are unconcern'd for them, or at enmity with them: 'tis ſcarce to be expected that we ſhould ſincerely beg God to bleſs thoſe, whom we go on bitterly to curſe; 'tis not to be thought, that we can in earneſt beſeech the Almighty to pardon thoſe, whom we our ſelves are uncharitably reſolv'd never to forgive.

THEY, who come to the Lord's table with this wicked diſpoſition of mind about them, cannot ſo properly be ſaid to remember the love, as to renew the ſufferings, of their Lord and Saviour. They don't praiſe, but affront; they don't worſhip, but provoke God: they grieve, they eſiſt, they quench the holy Spirit of peace and love. He who at any time hates his brother, is, by the Apoſtle St. *John*, ſaid expreſsly to be *a murderer*; 1 John 3. 15. but he who comes to the ſacrament, and ſtill cheriſhes this hatred in his breaſt, is a murderer, not only of his brother, but even of is Lord and Saviour, whom, by ſuch his uncharitableneſs, he again *rucifies afreſh, and puts* again *to an open ſhame.* Heb. 6. 6.

ALL ſin, all known, habitual, wilful ſin, unfits a man for the ſacrament; but the breach of charity, as it is in the higheſt degree contray to the nature and deſign of this divine inſtitution, ſo is it more eſpeially inconſiſtent with the due reception of theſe holy myſteries. And ur Church, therefore, as it hath directed all impenitent ſinners to abſtain from the ſacrament, ſo hath it more particularly forbid the unharitable to approach to this holy table. That this feaſt of love may ot be profan'd and defil'd by malicious and revengeful gueſts, ſhe hath irected the miniſter "not to ſuffer thoſe to be partakers of the Lord's "table, betwixt whom he perceives malice and hatred to reign." No erſon is, by the rules of our Church, to be admitted to the ſacrament, ill "he hath forgiven from the bottom of his heart all that his enemy "hath treſpaſs'd againſt him, and hath made amends for that he him"ſelf hath offended." In her exhortation to the ſacrament ſhe particuarly forbids thoſe to receive it, "who are in malice or envy", and diects them, that, "before they preſume to eat of this bread and drink "of this cup, they would reconcile themſelves to their neighbours, be "ready to make reſtitution and ſatisfaction according to the uttermoſt "of their powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by them to any other: "and be ready likewiſe to forgive others that have offended them; as they "would have forgiveneſs of their offences at God's hand." Without ch a diſpoſition and preparation of mind, "the receiving of the holy ſacrament, ſhe aſſures them, does nothing elſe but increaſe their "damnation." Thoſe only who "are in love and charity with their neighbours," are encourag'd by her to "draw near with faith, and take the "holy ſacrament to their comfort;" and if, therefore, we have any reard for the directions, the authority, the commands of our Church, we uſt conclude, that we cannot be good Communicants, except, in the ords of my text, we *who love God, love our brother alſo.*

WHAT hath been ſaid upon this ſubject hath been ſo plain and pratical, that no farther application need be made of it; no other conſierations are, we truſt, neceſſary to recommend it to your practice. et us therefore, if we would approve our ſelves ſincere Chriſtians, and orthy Communicants; if we would obey the commands, and worthily emember the love of Chriſt, be careful to abound, to encreaſe, to perevere in love to one another. And do thou, O God, "who haſt taught "us, that all our doings without charity are nothing worth, ſend thy "holy Spirit, and pour into our hearts that moſt excellent gift of cha"rity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which who"ſoever liveth is counted dead before thee. Grant this for thy only "Son Jeſus Chriſt's ſake.

SERMON XXXII.

PREACH'D BEFORE

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

LORD MAYOR, &c.

LUKE XIV. 14.

And thou ſhalt be bleſſed; for they cannot recompenſe thee: for thou ſhalt be recompenſed at the reſurrection of the Juſt.

THESE words were utter'd by our bleſſed Saviour, whilſt
v. 1. he was a gueſt at the table *of one of the chief Phariſees*. From what he had obſerv'd concerning the behaviour of thoſe who were bidden, and of him who was the entertainer, he took an occaſion to give proper advice to ſuch who ſhould be invited, and to ſuch as ſhould invite, to theſe feſtival entertainments. In the gueſts he took notice of an affected deſire of preeminence, and to theſe he recommends a modeſt humility: in the entertainer he ſeems to have diſcover'd a ſelfiſh deſign of making his court, and ſerving his own intereſt, under a falſe colour of friendſhip and hoſpitality; and to him therefore he preſcribes a generous and diſintereſted bounty. He ſhews both to the gueſts, and to the entertainer, their great miſtake in the purſuit of thoſe ſeveral ends, which they propos'd to themſelves; and proves to them, that by thoſe very means, which they took to compaſs their ends, they were defeated of the deſigns they had form'd; and that the beſt way to attain what they aim'd at, would be to uſe directly contrary methods. Honour was the aim of the gueſts, and intereſt was the ſcope of the inviter; but the former, by an irregular purſuit of honour, met with diſgrace; and the latter, by a wrong calculation of the advantage which he propos'd, did the greateſt prejudice to his own true intereſt.

He

HE *put forth a parable to thoſe which were bidden, when he mark'd how they choſe out the chief rooms; ſaying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, ſit not down in the higheſt room; leſt a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him, come and ſay to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with ſhame to take the loweſt room. But when thou art bidden, go and ſit down in the loweſt room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may ſay unto thee, Friend go up higher: then ſhalt thou have worſhip in the preſence of them that ſit at meat with thee. For whoſoever exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.* The proud and vain-glorious man purſues an empty ſhadow, which for that very reaſon becauſe he purſues it, it is certain he ſhall never be able to overtake: but the modeſt and humble perſon hath the only true ſecret of gaining honour, which is ſure to follow thoſe, who take the moſt care to run away from it. v. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

OUR Saviour having thus inſtructed the gueſts in the doctrine of humility, as the moſt proper method of arriving at true glory, doth in the next place addreſs himſelf to him who bade him, in this manner; *When thou makeſt a dinner or a ſupper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinſmen, nor thy rich neighbours; leſt they alſo bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makeſt a feaſt, call the poor, the maim'd, the lame, and the blind: and thou ſhalt be bleſſed; for they cannot recompenſe thee: for thou ſhalt be recompenſed at the reſurrection of the juſt.* Where intereſt is the principal aim of a man's actions, there, if he will be true to himſelf, he ought to purſue the greateſt and moſt laſting intereſt: ſince therefore the inviter aim'd at a recompence for his entertainment, he was miſtaken in the choice of his gueſts; and, out of a fooliſh deſire of a ſmall advantage in hand, excluded himſelf from the hopes of a much greater reward in reverſion. v. 12, 13, 14.

NOW as the humility, which our Saviour preſcribes in the former caſe, is not to be confin'd to our modeſt and decent behaviour, when we are invited to a feaſt, but is to be extended to all other occaſions of exerciſing this virtue, which is not here taught us as a piece of good-breeding, but as a neceſſary Chriſtian grace; ſo in like manner the diſintereſtedneſs, which our Saviour here enjoyns, is not to be reſtrain'd to the particular caſe of feſtival entertainments, but muſt reach to all other offices of humanity, loving-kindneſs, and beneficence towards each other. So that the doctrine here taught by our Saviour, when abſtracted from that particular occaſion upon which it was deliver'd, and applied to other caſes of the like nature with it, and to which it is by parity of reaſon equally applicable, doth plainly amount to this, that we ſhould not confine our offices of courteſie, friendſhip, or charity to thoſe only from whom we may expect a return of the like good offices; that we ſhould be bountiful, generous, and merciful to thoſe, from whom we do not look for a repayment either in kind or value; that we ſhould not after a mercenary and ſelfiſh manner ſo conduct our bounty, as it may beſt turn to account in the advancement of our temporal intereſt; but that we ſhould ſo order and manage it, as may beſt conduce to promote the eternal welfare of our ſouls. For, when we are here commanded to be beneficial to thoſe, from whom no recompence is to be expected, we are not by that command excluded from all hopes of any ſort of reward. Hope is the firſt ſpring of all our actions; and there can be no ſufficient reaſon aſſign'd, why we ſhould prefer any one action to another, but becauſe we have greater hopes of advantage from the one than from the other. And our gracious Lord and Maſter is ſo far from extinguiſhing this natural principle in us, that when he adviſes him who *makes a feaſt to call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind*, and grounds that advice on their inability to recompenſe him, he immediately ſubjoyns; *Thou ſhalt be recompenſed at the reſurrection of the juſt.* An eternal reward from the hand of God, for the good we do unto men, is made the motive to this duty; and therefore, whatever ſome ſpeculative men may have advanc'd to the contrary, it can be no fault in us to be influenc'd by the hopes of ſuch reward.

AND as we are not excluded from the expectation and deſire of a reward for our charitable deeds; ſo neither are we forbidden, whenever we do good to our brethren, to expect a requital from them. Were we never to ſhew any acts of kindneſs towards thoſe, from whom we had probable hopes of a return, men of thankful and generous diſpoſitions, who ſeem to have the beſt title to our favour, would be utterly excluded from it; and thoſe would be the moſt proper objects of our beneficence, whom we had found ungrateful, or who were moſt likely to prove ſuch. This advice of our Saviour was never interpreted in ſo rigorous a ſenſe, as that it ſhould be thought abſolutely unlawful for Chriſtians to invite their friends, their relations, or their rich neighbours to their table; all that is intended thereby, is, that neither our hoſpitality, nor our beneficence of any other kind, be reſtrain'd to thoſe who can recompenſe us; *but that* it take in others alſo, from whom we can expect no recompence. Our receiving good from others may, by God's providence, be the fruit and conſequence of our doing good to others; but it ought not to be the chief end, and principal motive of our beneficence and charity. And that for theſe three reaſons;

I. BECAUSE this is an end not ſure to be obtain'd by thoſe who propoſe it.
II. BECAUSE the propoſing to our ſelves this end will deprive us of a greater ſatisfaction here.
III. BECAUSE it will deprive us of a greater recompence hereafter.

Firſt, THE hopes of a recompence from men for the acts of beneficence we ſhew towards them, ought not to be our chief aim in doing good, becauſe this is an end not ſure to be obtain'd by us.

SOME men may be willing to think, that becauſe they find in themſelves a natural inclination to do all the good they can, there muſt needs be the ſame propenſity in the breaſts of others. A favour ſeaſonably beſtow'd poſſeſſeth their ſoul with gladneſs, warms them into thoughts of gratitude, and makes them uneaſie in themſelves till they can repay it and hence they are apt fondly to imagine, that others are made of the ſame ſoft and melting temper as themſelves, and that no heart is ſo hard as to be proof againſt repeated acts of kindneſs. Now ſuch thoughts as theſe are arguments of very good nature, but of very ſmall acquaintance with the world; for it is much to be fear'd, that that man hath done but little good in his generation, whoſe own experience hath not often confuted theſe ſpeculations. For many there are, whoſe thoughts and deſires are entirely wrapt up within themſelves; they find ſo much ſcope and ſo full employment for their affections at home, that they never

ſuffer

ffer them to rove abroad: their charity, as it begins, ſo it ends there
oo; they are ſenſible enough of the pleaſures and pains, which imme-
iately affect themſelves, but they think it an unaccountable paradox,
at one man ſhould feel another man's happineſs, or ſmart with ano-
er's pain. Now to men of this ſelfiſh temper favours are always wel-
ome, and there is no danger of over-loading them; but that exquiſite
eaſure, which ſome pretend to find in doing good, is a thing of which
eſe men have no reliſh, and therefore they are not haſty to make a
turn.

But ſhould our acts of kindneſs be always plac'd upon the moſt thank-
l, and moſt deſerving; ſhould the perſons gratified by us be always
th willing and able to make us a ſuitable return; yet after all, he who
truly and ſincerely kind even to ſuch perſons as theſe, may not meet
ith a requital equal to his kindneſs: for none can make a juſt recom-
nce for favours receiv'd, but ſuch as know their full value. Now this
to be taken from the intent of him who beſtows it, and cannot always
diſcern'd by the party oblig'd. Here then an honeſt, ſincere, and truly
nerous perſon will lie under a great diſadvantage; for it is his chara-
r rather to be good and beneficent, than to appear ſo: he feels ſenti-
nts of love towards his brethren, beyond what he is either willing or
e to expreſs; he chuſes rather to ſmother his kind affections, than to
oclaim them; and whilſt he is ſo little careful to diſplay the due worth
his favours, it is no wonder if he ſhould find an unproportionable
vard from thoſe, who can make no true eſtimate of their value.

And as thoſe, who do good unto others, cannot be ſure of any recom-
nce from thoſe to whom they do good, and can be ſtill leſs ſure of a
ompence equal to the good they do; ſo they can be leaſt of all cer-
n of a recompence for good offices done barely upon that proſpect.
r men are always upon their guard againſt any kindneſs beſtow'd on
m, which carries with it an appearance of deſign: where they had vo-
tarily intended an act of favour or charity, they are apt to withdraw
ir hand, if they find it is look'd for: and for the ſame reaſon, where
y deſign a recompence for benefits receiv'd, they are leſs ſolicitous to
ke it, when it is exacted. For altho' gratitude be a debt which we are
und in juſtice to diſcharge; yet a creditor, who is too importunate, doth
that very reaſon often fail of receiving what is his due. But on the
er ſide, he who gratifies another without the proſpect of a return,
h, for that very reaſon, the faireſt title to a recompence: for whilſt
aims not at a requital, he doth that upon other and better motives,
ich is moſt likely to procure it. His only aim is to pleaſe God, who
h commanded him to do good unto men without any regard to a re-
pence from them: and God, who hath the diſpoſal of mens hearts, is
aſ'd to recompenſe the purity of his intention, by inclining them to
him all the offices of love and gratitude.

ow, if we cannot be ſure of any return from men for the good of-
s we do them; if we can be leſs ſure of an equal return; and leaſt of
f a recompence which we aim at; it will be very improper to make
the principal motive of our doing good unto our brethren, becauſe
end is ſometimes impoſſible, often difficult, never certain, to be ob-
'd. But that which makes the doing good on this motive ſtill more
eaſonable, is our

econd conſideration; that the propoſing to our ſelves this end will de-
ve us of a greater ſatisfaction here.

THERE is implanted in us a natural deſire of excelling, or at leaſt of equalling, each other: to be above others is our firſt and moſt eager wiſh; and if we cannot reach that, our next deſire is to be at leaſt upon the level. Now he who hath by acts of beneficence oblig'd another, is ſo far upon the upper ground: for whatever other relation he may ſtand in as to his fortune, birth, or condition; yet as benefactor he is ſtill ſuperior to that perſon, whom by his benefits he hath oblig'd. And this is an advantage which a noble, and generous mind will not part with for any mean and ſordid intereſt: for that man muſt have but little ſenſe of true honour, who would not chooſe rather to be a creditor than a debtor; a patron than a client; a lender than a borrower; or, to ſpeak in the language of our parable, an entertainer than a gueſt. The communicating good things argues ſufficiency and plenty, whilſt the receiving of good things is a mark rather of impotence and want. We have the authority of truth it ſelf for the certainty of this maxim, *that it is more bleſſed to give than to receive.* Acts 20. 35.

NO one can more highly oblige a truly generous perſon, than by affording him an opportunity of doing good; and hence it is that to one thus diſpos'd the having been kind is a ſtronger motive to be farther kind to the ſame perſon, than the having receiv'd kindneſs from him would be. It is a groſs miſtake of ſome men to think, that our wants only and imperfections do naturally induce us to be beneficent to each other; for altho' we had no wants of our own to be ſupplied, yet we ſhould be uneaſie, unleſs we could vent our abundance. We are not more eager to ſound the notions and ſentiments of others, than we are to communicate our own; we do not find more pleaſure in learning, than we do in teaching, uſeful truths: nor doth he, on whom a ſeaſonable charity is beſtow'd, feel his ſoul filled with ſo much joy and ſatisfaction, as poſſeſs the mind of him who beſtows it. Now this joy will be more genuine and intire, when we are ſure, that our good deeds flow from a ſound principle; when our conſciences bear us witneſs, that no ſelf-intereſt mixes it ſelf with our deſigns of being uſeful to mankind; that there is a ſecret ſpring of benevolence within us, which wants not to be ſet on work by the hopes of any temporal advantage; and that we can be content to be beneficial to thoſe who want our help, without any other applauſe, than that of our own conſciences. No one who doeth good to thoſe only from whom he expects to receive good, can ever be fully ſatisfied of his own ſincerity; he can never ſurely know, whether charity or ſelf-love influences his good deeds; and the grateful acknowledgments of others will afford him but little ſatisfaction, whilſt he wants thoſe applauſes, which he ſhould receive from himſelf within his own breaſt. But the pleaſures which ariſe from this purity of intention, and conſciouſneſs of doing good, merely for the ſake of doing good, ſuppoſe a greatneſs of ſpirit and nobleneſs of mind beyond the uſual pitch of human nature. The moſt proper argument to prevail on men ſtrongly devoted to their own intereſt is to convince them, that what we perſwade them to is for their own proper benefit, what we diſſwade them from is to their own perſonal diſadvantage. Now even theſe men, if they will be true to their own principles, will not think the receiving good from men the principal end they ought to aim at in their doing good; becauſe

Thirdly, THE propoſing to themſelves this end will deprive them of a greater recompence hereafter.

OUR

OUR Saviour in his Goſpel hath repreſented the proſpect of a reompence from men for actions done to gain their affection and eſteem, nd the view of a recompence from God for the ſame actions, as inonſiſtent with, and repugnant to, each other. Which of theſe two ewards we will receive, he hath left to our option; but he who prooſes to himſelf the former, doth by ſuch propoſal diſclaim the latter. *Thoſe who ſound a trumpet before the giving of alms, that they may have lory of men; thoſe who pray in the corners of ſtreets, that they may e ſeen of men; thoſe, who when they faſt, diſfigure their faces, that hey may appear unto men to faſt, theſe verily have their reward*; they ain the applauſe which they ſought; and becauſe they ſought it, are xcluded from all hopes of a *reward from their Father which is in heaen.* The direction of our good works to a good end is the only priniple, which, according to our Saviour's doctrine, diſtinguiſheth the harity of ſaints from the gifts of ſinners. *For if ye love them which ove you, what thank have ye? For ſinners alſo love thoſe that love hem. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank ave ye? For ſinners alſo do even the ſame. And if ye lend to them, f whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? For ſinners alſo lend o ſinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and o good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward ſhall be reat.* The publican and the diſciple, the heathen and the Chriſtian, ay agree in the material acts of charity; but that which formally akes this a Chriſtian grace, is the ſpring from which it flows, and the ecompence at which it aims.

Mat. 6.

Luke 6. 32, 33, 34, 35.

THUS plainly hath Chriſt reveal'd unto us the meaſures, according o which God will proceed at the great day of retribution, in diſpenſing is rewards; and it is eaſie to diſcover the great wiſdom and goodneſs, s well as the juſtice, of God in this diſpenſation. For it is agreeable o the divine wiſdom and goodneſs to eſtabliſh a duty of ſuch univerſal oncern to mankind, as is the doing good to others, upon a firm and ure principle; ſuch an one as might engage all men to do all the good oſſible, at all times, to all perſons whatſoever. But the proſpect of a eturn from thoſe to whom we do good would have been too narrow nd weak a foundation to have ſupported ſuch a conſtant, impartial, unierſal beneficence, as is abſolutely neceſſary for the well-being of manind.

WERE there no ſtronger motives to charity, than the ſlender hopes f a recompence from men, thoſe who have the greateſt power to do ood, would have leaſt obligation: for the more able they are to reieve the wants of others, the leſs do they themſelves want to receive rom others; and therefore they would be leſs careful to ſupply the neeſſities of the indigent, ſince their own ſufficiency is ſuch, as needs no utual ſupply. And as thoſe who are moſt able, would upon theſe moives be leaſt bound, to do good; ſo, if this principle obtain'd, thoſe ho moſt want the aſſiſtance of others, would have leaſt reaſon to expect it. For if no good were to be done but in hopes of a return from he party to whom it is done, thoſe muſt expect to receive no beneits, whoſe indigence is ſuch, that they can repay none. Charity diſplays it ſelf in ſeveral acts, for which there would be no room, if it were lways govern'd by this narrow principle. One man might be kind to nother out of intereſt, and hopes of a proportionable return; but no one would be concern'd to lay out himſelf for the good of his country, of his church, of mankind; becauſe theſe are ſervices, for which in this world he can expect no equal recompence. There are, moreover, many offices of charity, which are beſt perform'd in ſecret; many pious Chriſtians are as aſſiduous in procuring their brother's good, as is his Guardian-Angel; and they take care to be equally inviſible; the ſtreams of their bounty flow under ground; the hungry and thirſty are refreſh'd by them, but know not the ſpring from which they iſſue: but ſuch charitable benefactions as theſe muſt neceſſarily fail, were men influenc'd only by the mean hopes of temporal advantage, and had not he who ſeeth theſe things in ſecret, promis'd to reward them openly.

But were the proſpect of a preſent recompence ſufficient to make men charitable in their own generation, and uſeful to the age wherein they live; yet upon this bottom no proviſion would be made for poſterity: for no one is in capacity of a requital from thoſe, who are not to enter into this world, 'till he is gone out of it; ſo that the intereſt of ſucceeding ages would by the preſent be intirely neglected. But mankind hath great reaſon to rejoice, that neither the hopes nor charity of good men have been confin'd within the narrow bounds of their own age; but that ſome have thought it their duty *to ſow, even where they could not reap*; and to convey down thoſe bleſſings to future times, the fruits of which others ſhall enjoy as long as the ſun and moon endure, but for which they can themſelves expect no recompence, but from that righteous judge, whoſe reward is with him to give to every man according to his work.

Those who have been the pious and munificent founders of publick hoſpitals, for the reception and maintenance of poor and indigent perſons, have, in a literal ſenſe, follow'd the advice given in this parable by our Saviour: *the poor, the maim'd, the lame, and the blind* are their conſtant gueſts; are daily fed at their table, and entertain'd at their expence. Theſe have taken the moſt effectual care to bid thoſe, who cannot bid them again, nor make them any ſort of recompence, no, not ſo much as by their good wiſhes and prayers. Theſe therefore above others will be bleſſed; theſe, as we have good reaſon to believe, are already bleſſed in a great meaſure; and for theſe we are aſſur'd there is ſtill reſerv'd an ampler recompence *at the reſurrection of the juſt*.

And as thoſe, whoſe abilities of doing good are greateſt, have no reaſon to contract their bounty, ſince God hath provided a reward equal to the moſt diffuſive acts of their beneficence; ſo thoſe, whoſe power falls ſhort of their wills, have ſufficient encouragement to exert their utmoſt endeavours; ſince altho' charitable deeds only can hope for a reward from men, and that but in proportion to their real value; yet charitable purpoſes alſo, and ſuch meaſures of doing good as were ſincerely intended, but thro' inability could not be actually perform'd, will be crown'd with a recompence from God; who hath promis'd *to accept according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not*.

For the reaſons which have been given, and for many others which might be alleg'd, it is manifeſt, that the publick good of mankind is beſt provided for by the propoſal of a future reward to benefactors; and that the hopes of receiving good from thoſe, whom we at any time gratifie, would produce but a very narrow, defective, and ſtinted charity. For the truth of which we might ſafely appeal to the judgment of thoſe, who are moſt wedded to their own intereſt; ſince however they may be willing never to beſtow a kindneſs, but where they have the proſpect of an

equiquivalent, they would be very unwilling never to hope for good, but t the hands of ſuch, whom they had antecedently oblig'd.

If, from what hath been deliver'd, it appears to be agreeable to the iſdom and goodneſs of God, to provide ſuch a recompence for acts of harity, bounty, and loving-kindneſs, as might anſwer thoſe great purоſes, which could not be ſerv'd by a bare exchange of good offices; will alſo be agreeable to his juſtice to deny this recompence to ſuch, ho are influenc'd by any other principle, than the hopes of it: for no e can have any pretence to a recompence from God for any actions, t what are done, becauſe of his command, for his ſake, and to his ory. But good deeds, perform'd barely in view of what we may reive from men, are ſo far from tending to the glory of God, that there n ſcarce be a greater diſhonour to his name, than to prefer thoſe frail d momentary rewards, which our fellow-creatures can beſtow, to that ernal weight of glory, which our almighty Creator hath prepar'd for oſe, who are willing to wait upon him for a final recompence.

God hath indeed made our eternal and our temporal intereſt, in oſt caſes, very conſiſtent; but altho' God may in his abundant mercy in both, yet we cannot without breach of his holy commandment ually intend both; we muſt *firſt ſeek the kingdom of God, and* then Mat. 6. 33. e may hope that the bleſſings of this life *ſhall* alſo *be added unto us.* the laws of nature, and of the Goſpel, thoſe who love their brethren, ve a juſt title to their reciprocal affection; but then, by the rules of the ne divine law, it is made an eſſential property of Chriſtian charity, at it ſhould not *ſeek its own.* Our Saviour hath taught us, that *man can ſerve two maſters*; if each acts by an independent power, v. 24. eir commands may interfere: and altho' they ſhould be ſubordinate e to the other, and both ſhould enjoyn the ſame duty; yet he who th that thing in compliance with an inferior power, which he is not evail'd upon to do by the authority of the ſuperior, is guilty of more ntempt to ſuch higher power, than if he did it not at all. He who us obſerves what is acceptable to both, to God and to man, merely regard to the latter, cannot perhaps be accus'd *of loving the one, and ting the other*; but he is certainly guilty *of holding to the one, and ſpiſing the other*; and therefore he muſt not hope for a reward from od for that ſervice, which he performs purely to gain the wages of *ammon.*

Now, if the propoſal of a recompence from men for our charitable eds cuts us off from all hopes of an eternal recompence for them at e hands of God; if one bears no proportion to the other; if he who omiſes himſelf the former, is often defeated of that, and always ſure be excluded from the latter; if, on the other ſide, he who doeth od unto men in hopes of a recompence from God, hath juſt grounds expect the bleſſings of this life, and is ſure to be crown'd with the ys and glories of the next; nothing farther needs to be added to enrce the duty of the text, or to ſhew the reaſonableneſs of doing good to thoſe who cannot recompenſe us; becauſe for ſo doing *we ſhall be compens'd at the reſurrection of the juſt.*

The promiſe of ſuch a future recompence at the laſt day is the moſt genuous, the moſt prevalent, the only right motive to a liberal, conant, and diſintereſted exerciſe of all ſorts and all meaſures of Chriſtian harity; and therefore, amongſt the many pious and wiſe inſtitutions of r Reform'd anceſtors, for promoting and encouraging publick charities, none was with greater prudence contriv'd, none hath been bleſs'd with happier ſucceſs, than their godly appointment, that theſe anniverſary meetings of the Magiſtrates of this city, and the Governours of its hoſpitals, for carrying on the good work committed to their care and patronage, ſhould be held on thoſe ſolemn days of feſtivity, which the Church had before ſet apart for the memorial of our Saviour's reſurrection. For they wiſely foreſaw, that when the minds of men were eſtabliſh'd in a firm belief of *Chriſt's being riſen from the dead, and become the firſt-fruits of them that ſlept*; whilſt their thoughts were yet warm with a certain proſpect of their own reſurrection; whilſt the voice of the laſt trumpet, ſummoning them to awake out of the ſleep of death, to appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, and there to receive ſentence of eternal miſery or bliſs, according to their having been uncharitable or charitable to their brethren, was, by the miniſtry of God's Word, ſtill ſounding in their ears, they would then be beſt prepar'd with gladneſs of ſoul to receive, with warmth of affection to embrace, with all cheerfulneſs of compliance to obey, theſe annual exhortations to charity. For it is obſervable, that the final recompence promis'd by our Saviour to acts of beneficence done to thoſe who cannot recompenſe us, is not only deferr'd to a future ſtate, but farther reſerv'd till *the reſurrection of the juſt*.

It is an opinion in this age generally receiv'd, that the ſouls of departed ſaints are, immediately after their ſeparation from the body, convey'd by the holy angels into the higheſt heavens, and forthwith admitted into the glorious preſence of God, and there poſſeſs'd of the ſame happineſs and glory, which they ſhall enjoy to all eternity. But it is more conſonant to the Word of God, and to the primitive doctrine of the Catholick Church, to believe that the happineſs of ſouls, whilſt ſequeſtred from their bodies, is in the degree of it leſs perfect before, than it ſhall be after, the reſurrection; that it conſiſts rather in a total releaſe from ſin and miſery, in a joyful retroſpect upon their paſt labours and holineſs of their lives, and a certain proſpect of their future bliſs, than in a full participation of their ultimate reward; that, as the pious and faithful are in Scripture, even whilſt they are in this world, ſaid *to rejoice with joy unſpeakable*, as often as they fix their eyes upon that ample recompence, which they hope then to receive, when Chriſt ſhall come in glory; ſo the delight, which the aſſurance of this reward will afford them, when it is by death brought nearer, when they ſee it more clearly, when there are no fears of falling ſhort of it, no doubts of obtaining it, when they have an earneſt and pledge of it in that tranquillity, of which they are already poſſeſs'd, ſhall be ſtill more raviſhing and unconceivable; *but that* even this ſtate, joyful and happy as it is, in compariſon to the utmoſt felicity of which we are capable in this life, is as much inferior to that conſummate bliſs, which glorified Saints ſhall enjoy after the reſurrection, as the expectation of a diſtant good is to the preſent enjoyment thereof, as hope is to actual poſſeſſion.

We have not in the whole Goſpel a fuller and clearer account of the proceſs of the laſt day, than that which is given us by our Saviour in the 25th chapter of St. *Matthew*. Now, according to the repreſentation there made, Chriſt our Lord and Judge ſhall not on that ſolemn day ratifie the ſentence, which he had before paſt on each man ſeverally, but ſhall then firſt pronounce ſentence upon all nations gathered before him. The charitable ſhall be then invited to *come, and inherit the kingdom, prepared*

Mat. 25. 34.

ndeed for them long before, but not till that time poſſeſſed by them. hey are there repreſented as mightily ſurpriz'd, that the judge ſhould eward them for actions, of which they were not at all conſcious; they re not able to conceive how they had fed him, whom they had never en hungry, or given drink to him, whom they had never ſeen thirſty; ow they had cloathed him, whom they never found naked; or viſited im, whom they had never remembred to be ſick, or in priſon; they do ot appear to be as yet acquainted with his wonderful goodneſs and con- eſcenſion in eſteeming what was *done unto the leaſt of his brethren, as one unto himſelf.* But now, how ſhall we account for this ſurprize, if e righteous had long ſince receiv'd their full recompence for theſe ve- y acts of charity? Why do they at the day of judgment, after the gene- l reſurrection, ſtand before the throne of Chriſt's glory; why are their ood works then diſplay'd; why is their reward then allotted, if they e on that day admitted into the participation of no other glory, than at with which they were before glorified? Do not then thoſe perſons xpoſe the doctrine of an univerſal reſurrection and judgment to un- eceſſary and unanſwerable exceptions, who teach that men ſhall, imme- iately after death, receive a full recompence for all the actions they have one in the body, and that long afterwards they ſhall be formally judged, order to receive that very recompence? Is it not a doctrine more con- ſtent in it ſelf, as well as more agreeable to the whole tenour of holy Vrit, to believe that there is a great deal of difference betwixt the mea- ures of joy, which thoſe who die in the Lord ſhall taſte of before, and fter, the reſurrection; that a great part of their happineſs, in their in- ermediate ſtate, ſhall conſiſt in the ſure hopes of a much more perfect appineſs ſtill in reverſion; that after the reſurrection there ſhall be an cceſſion to the bleſſedneſs of the righteous, not only by their being then lorified in body, as well as in ſpirit, but alſo by an increaſe of that bliſs, hich their ſouls did before enjoy in a lower degree, and more ſcanty roportion; and that they ſhall then be admitted to a cloſer and nearer iew of God, and to a more intimate union with him, who is the ſource f all happineſs? To this great day of retribution our Saviour refers us, or reaping the fruits of what we here ſow in the moſt hungry and bar- en ſoil: he doth not only pronounce in general, that thoſe who invite he poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, and ſuch as cannot re- ompenſe them, ſhall be bleſſed; but he aſſigns the punctual time of epayment, when he promiſes them that *they ſhall be recompens'd at the eſurrection of the juſt.*

Mat. 25. 45.

THE application of what hath been deliver'd to the occaſion, for which we are here ſolemnly aſſembled, is obvious and eaſy: for by the report which is now to be read, it will appear, that thoſe who have been ſuſtain'd by your charity the preceding year, and who depend upon it for their future ſuſtenance, are perſons, from whom you can expect no recompence: and when it hath been read, I ſhall detain you no longer, than briefly to obſerve, that for that reaſon you are encourag'd to be liberal towards them, that you may thereby be intitled to a recompence *at the reſurrection of the juſt.*

Here the Report was read.

THE orphans and fatherleſs do, with that humility which becomes their low eſtate, and with that earneſtneſs which is warranted by their preſſing wants, apply to you for protection and relief. On God's providence, and on your bounty, all their preſent ſupport, and all their future hopes, entirely depend: ſuch is the imbecillity of their age; ſuch the meanneſs of their condition, that from them it will be in vain to expect any requital for your charity. They are unhappily bereft of thoſe fathers, who if alive, might peradventure, in ſome meaſure, by their bodily labour, or their manual arts, or their popular ſuffrages, promote your wealth, or pleaſure, or grandeur: but ſtill they have a Father in heaven, even God in his holy habitation, who will, *at the reſurrection of the juſt*, abundantly recompenſe you for all the acts of kindneſs, mercy, and compaſſion, which you ſhall ſhew towards theſe little ones, whom he vouchſafes in a more peculiar manner to favour with his paternal love, and care, and bleſſing.

THE ſick and diſeas'd, the maim'd and wounded, do all ſeek at your hands an alleviation of their ſorrows, refreſhment under their pains, and the happy means of their recovery. From perſons labouring under their infirmities, diſabled from the offices of life, ready to be ſwallow'd up by the jaws of death, the very utmoſt requital you can at preſent expect is their thanks, their good wiſhes, and their prayers. But if by your ſeaſonable relief, either their lives ſhould be prolong'd, or their deaths made more eaſy to them; whether they live to acknowledge your charity, or whether they die, and the hopes of any the leaſt recompence at their hands be extinguiſh'd with them; your good deeds ſhall be had in everlaſting remembrance, and ſhall find an ample recompence *at the reſurrection of the juſt*; when for your charitable aſſiſtance of your poor brethren, under their bodily infirmities, God ſhall cloath your ſouls with bodies incorruptible and immortal, liable to no infirmity, ſubject to no diſeaſe, capable of no decay, but by their vigour, activity, and ſprightlineſs, at all times fitted for the enjoyment of perfect and conſummate happineſs in that bleſſed and glorious ſtate,
Rev. 21. 4. where *there ſhall be no more ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain.*

WE are ſtill farther ſupplicants to you in behalf of thoſe miſerable wretches, whoſe minds are over-caſt with a deep and ſettled melancholy, or diſtracted by wild and outrageous phrenſy. Theſe do not indeed implore your help, being ſo far depriv'd of the uſe of their reaſon, as to be altogether inſenſible of their wants: but the more incapable they are of pleading their own cauſe, the more excuſable will be our importunity in ſolliciting, the more commendable your readineſs in reaching forth to them, your charitable aſſiſtance. So great perhaps is the ſtupidity of ſome of theſe, that they may have no ſenſe of the help adminiſtred to them; ſo exceſſive the rage of others, that they may break out into the higheſt expreſſions and moſt violent acts of fury againſt their beſt friends and benefactors. But altho' no recompence is to be expected from them, tho' for good they may recompenſe evil; yet this ought to be no bar to our charity towards them; ſince the leſs thankful or the more injurious treatment we find at their hands, the ſtronger is our claim to a recompence *at the reſurrection of the juſt.*

IN proſpect of this recompence we may venture to recommend, tho' not to your affection and favour, yet to your charity and care, even the idle and vagrant, the looſe and diſorderly; there is a debt of love, which even theſe may challenge at your hands, and which cannot be with-held from them without injuſtice. Hard labour, wholſom diſcipline,

line, due correction, are proper methods of reclaiming theſe perſons
rom their vicious courſes; and therefore in charity to them, as well
s for your own ſecurity, and for the publick weal, theſe methods ought
o be applied. Theſe benefactions are not indeed ſought for by thoſe,
ho moſt ſtand in need of them; ſo far will they be from being thank-
lly accepted, that they will provoke the keeneſt reſentments from
hoſe on whom they are beſtow'd; but if by exemplary puniſhments
he profligate ſhall be reform'd from their evil habits, or others be de-
err'd from running into the ſame exceſſes; if by your well-plac'd cha-
ity ſinners ſhall be converted from the evil of their ways, and innocent
uls ſhall eſcape the contagion of ſin; then, at the reſurrection of the
ead, both they and you ſhall ſtand at the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, they
o receive the rewards promis'd to the penitent, you to obtain a ſtill
righter *crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous Judge* 2 Tim. 4. 8.
ſhall give you at that day; from whenceforth, *the wiſe ſhall ſhine as the* Dan. 12. 3.
rightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteouſneſs
s the ſtars, for ever and ever.

Preach'd on Trinity-Sunday.

SERMON XXXIII.

The Uſe of Reaſon in Religion.

ACTS XVII. 2.

And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three ſabbath-days reaſon'd with them out of the Scriptures.

THERE hath been an opinion too haſtily taken up, and too warmly maintain'd by ſome, that reaſon is very little to be hearkned to in matters of Religion; that we are to believe nothing, but what is expreſsly taught us in the Word of God; and that we are not to draw conſequences from Scripture, and to make them the articles of our faith, but muſt ſtrictly confine our ſelves to the very language of Holy Writ, and admit of no doctrines, but what are there in ſo many words and ſyllables deliver'd.

WHEN we would prove againſt the *Romaniſts* the inſufficiency of thoſe arguments, which are by them brought in favour of the *Pope's* ſupremacy, the invocation of ſaints, or any other error of that Church, they refuſe to be determin'd by any of our proofs which we draw from Scripture; and demand of us, that we would cite ſome text, where it is plainly ſaid, that the Biſhop of *Rome* is not head of the Church; that the ſaints in heaven are not to be pray'd to; and that by conſecration there is no change of the ſubſtance of bread and wine into the body and blood of Chriſt.

WHEN againſt the *Separatiſts* from our Church we would prove the authority of our biſhops, the uſefulneſs of our liturgy, or the decency of our ceremonies; when we would ſhew the agreeableneſs of our diſcipline, our worſhip, and our rites, to the Word of God, they will allow no credit to our reaſoning, but challenge us to point out any text in the Bible, where it is ſaid, that Biſhops are a ſuperior order to Presbyters; that we ought to pray in a ſet form; and that he who miniſters in holy things is requir'd to wear a ſurplice.

When againſt the diſciples of *Arius* or *Socinus* we endeavour to rove the doctrine of the Trinity, as it hath been always taught by the atholick Church, and as it is by us at this day profeſs'd, they reject all r allegations from Scripture, and call upon us to ſhew them a text, herein it is ſaid as expreſly, as it is in the articles of our Church, at, "in the unity of the Godhead there be three perſons of one ſubſtance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt.

Now true it is, that the Scriptures are the adequate rule of our faith; t then it is not alſo true, nor by us confeſs'd, that nothing is to be ok'd upon as taught us in Scripture, but what is there in ſo many ords deliver'd. It is the doctrine of our Church, that "the Holy Scripture containeth all things neceſſary to our ſalvation; ſo that nothing is to be requir'd of any man to be believ'd as an article of faith, which is not read therein, or which may not be prov'd thereby". This diſjunction would be unneceſſary, if there were not ſome things, which, ho' they are not read therein, may yet be prov'd thereby. As well what ay from thence be prov'd, as what is therein read, may be believ'd as n article of faith, and may be requiſite and neceſſary to our ſalvation. S. *Paul*, we find in the text, reaſon'd out of the Scriptures, and we alſo ay ſo reaſon. What is rightly inferr'd from the Scriptures doth as uch challenge our aſſent, as what is literally deliver'd in the Scriptures. his is the doctrine which I ſhall

I. Prove from the authority and example of Chriſt and his Apoſtles.
II. Defend againſt the objections that are made to it.
III. Apply in a few words to the myſteries of our faith, and particularly to that of the Trinity, which we are this day to commemorate.

Firſt I am to prove this doctrine from the authority and example of hriſt and his Apoſtles.

Christ and his Apoſtles do often make uſe of arguing and reaſoning, oth for the eſtabliſhment of thoſe truths which they taught, and for e confutation of thoſe errors which they oppos'd. When the tempter ok up our Saviour *into an exceeding high mountain, and ſhew'd him* Mat. 4. 8, 9. *l the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*, and offer'd to give em to him, on condition that *he would fall down and worſhip him*; hriſt ſhew'd the ſinfulneſs of what was propos'd to him from that text *Moſes, Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou* Deut. 6. 13. *rve*. When the ſame tempter would have perſwaded him to have *caſt imſelf down* from the *pinnacle of the temple*, he thought it a ſufficient ply to ſuch a ſuggeſtion to allege, that it was written, *Thou ſhalt not* v. 16. *mpt the Lord thy God*. Now theſe reaſonings of our Saviour againſt is worſhipping Satan, and throwing himſelf down, are inconcluſive, if e may not argue from Scripture; and if we muſt admit of nothing as ught therein, which is not there ſet down in expreſs words; ſince neiher is it ſaid in the former of theſe texts, that Satan is not to be worhipp'd; nor in the latter, that Chriſt might not throw himſelf down om the pinnacle of the temple.

It was an ancient tradition amongſt the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, that any one had raſhly dedicated to God his eſtate, out of which he might ave reliev'd his parents, he was no longer under any obligation of af-

Mat. 15. 4. fording them relief. Chriſt proves to them the abſurdity of this tra-
Exod. 20. 12. dition from thoſe laws, wherein *Moſes* had ſaid, *Honour thy father and*
c. 21. 17. *mother*; and, *Whoſo curſeth his father or mother, let him die the death.*
But neither of theſe laws doth expreſsly and in ſo many words enjoyn
that duty, which our Saviour doth from them infer; and yet we can-
not deny the inference to be juſt.

WHEN the *Sadducees* put captious queſtions to our Saviour about
the reſurrection of the dead, he ſhew'd the weakneſs of their objections
againſt it by proving to them, that the doctrine by them oppos'd was
taught by *Moſes*, whoſe authority they did not, and could not, diſpute.
Mat. 22. 31, 32. *As touching the reſurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which*
Exod. 3. 6. *was ſpoken to you by God, ſaying, I am the God of Abraham, and the*
God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead,
but of the living. The Evangeliſt obſerves that by this anſwer the *Sad-*
ducees were put to ſilence; and that *the multitude, when they heard*
this, were aſtoniſh'd at his doctrine. But if thoſe, who are againſt all
reaſoning from Scripture; who will admit of nothing, but what is di-
rectly therein contain'd, had been in the place of the *Sadducees*, they
would not ſo eaſily have yielded to our Saviour's argument; they would
have rejected this teſtimony from *Moſes*, as not direct, and would have
requir'd a more formal and plain proof; they would have allow'd of no
inferences, which depended upon human reaſon, and would have re-
plied to our Saviour, that, in the text by him alleg'd, there was *not* one
word concerning the reſurrection of the dead.

THE Apoſtles, in their writings, follow the ſteps of their Lord and
Maſter; and prove the truths of the Goſpel againſt the *Jews*, who gain-
ſay'd them, not from any paſſages in the Old Teſtament, in which the
Goſpel-truths are expreſsly and in ſo many words laid down, but by
arguments and reaſons drawn from the writings of *Moſes* and the Pro-
Acts. 3. 22. phets. Thus St. *Peter* proves the coming of Chriſt from thoſe words
Deut. 18. 15. of *Moſes*, *A Prophet ſhall the Lord your God raiſe up unto you of your*
Acts. 2. 27. *brethren, like unto me*: and his reſurrection from that place of the
Pſal. 16. 10. *Pſalms, Thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell; neither wilt thou ſuffer*
thine holy One to ſee corruption.

Rom. 4. 7. AFTER the ſame manner St. *Paul* proves that we are juſtified, not
Pſal. 32. 1. by the law, but by grace, from thoſe words of the *Pſalmiſt*, *Bleſſed*
are they whoſe iniquities are forgiven, and whoſe ſins are cover'd. He
Rom. 9. 33. proves the rejection of the *Jews* from the propheſy of *Iſaiah*; *Behold*
Iſai. 28. 16. *I lay in Sion a ſtumbling-ſtone, and rock of offence*; and the vocation of
Rom. 9. 25. the *Gentiles* from *Hoſea*'s having brought in God, ſaying, *I will call*
Hoſea. 2. 23. *them my people, which were not my people.* The whole Epiſtle of
St. *Paul* to the *Hebrews* is made up of ſuch proofs as theſe: from that
Pſal. 2. 7. paſſage of the *Pſalmiſt*, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,*
Heb. 5. 5. he infers the preeminence of Chriſt above the angels: from the hiſtory
Gen. 14. 18. of *Melchiſedec*, as related by *Moſes*, he proves the eternal prieſthood
Heb. 7. 21. of Chriſt; and from the oath of God mention'd by *David*, *The Lord*
Pſal. 110. 4. *hath ſworn, and will not repent*, he argues for the immutability and
perpetuity of the Goſpel-diſpenſation. This way of arguing he at all
times, and in all parts of his writings, makes uſe of: from thoſe truths,
which are expreſsly read in Scripture, by the laws of reaſoning he in-
fers other doctrines, which are not there formally read, but which do
from them follow, and are therefore in them virtually contain'd. This
was his conſtant and known method of inſtructing his hearers; and

there-

herefore St. *Luke* tells us here in my text, that St. *Paul*, *as his man-*
er was, went in unto them, and three ſabbath-days reaſon'd with them
ut of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Chriſt muſt needs have
uffer'd, and riſen again from the dead; and that that Jeſus, whom he
reach'd unto them, was Chriſt.

Now it is evident, and on all hands acknowledg'd, that this aſſertion,
eſus is the Chriſt, is no where laid down in theſe very words through-
ut the writings of the Old Teſtament. *Moſes* and the Prophets do, in-
eed, bear witneſs to him; but, in the teſtimony they give, they no where
xpreſsly and formally declare, that Jeſus is the Chriſt. How then could
e Apoſtles demonſtrate this propoſition from their writings? How do
ey bring them in as vouchers of this truth? Do they not refer us to
ch paſſages in the Prophets, from whence this doctrine, which is not
expreſs words aſſerted, is by right reaſoning regularly deduc'd? From
e ſeveral parts of the Old Teſtament, compar'd one with another, they
rm the character of the *Meſſiah*, and then they prove, that this cha-
cter did truly belong to that Jeſus, whom they affirm'd to be the *Meſſiah*.
e, who was diſtinguiſh'd by ſuch and ſuch marks; he, who was to be
orn at ſuch a determin'd time and place; he, who was to teach ſuch
d ſuch doctrines, in ſuch and ſuch a manner; he, who was to do ſuch
d ſuch wonderful things, and to ſuffer ſuch and ſuch cruel hardſhips,
as the *Meſſiah* foretold by the Prophets. All theſe marks, whereby
e *Meſſiah* was to be known, were found in the bleſſed Jeſus; at the
me and place, when and where the *Meſſias* was to be born, he was
orn; what the *Meſſias* was to teach, to do, and to ſuffer, he taught, did,
d ſuffer'd; it follows therefore neceſſarily that *Jeſus is the Chriſt*.

This method of proving St. *Luke* has expreſs'd in very proper and ap-
oſite words, when he tells us, that St. *Paul reaſon'd out of the Scrip-*
ures, opening and alleging; the word παρατιθέμενον, which we tranſlate al-
ging, doth properly mean applying: the Apoſtle firſt open'd to them
e ſenſe of the Prophets, explain'd their words, and ſhew'd their true
eaning; and when he had thus open'd the propheſies; when he had ſhewn
hat their ſcope and intention was; what was the ſenſe which they de-
gn'd to convey to the minds of thoſe who ſhould hear or read their
ropheſies, by the expreſſions which they us'd; he did then fit and apply
e propheſies thus explain'd to the perſon, and the doctrine, and works,
Jeſus; he plac'd the one by the other, to diſcover their agreement; he
mpar'd the predictions with the events, the ſhadows with the bodies,
e figures with the things prefigur'd; ſo that by this method the truth
the Goſpel, which they preach'd, was manifeſtly and irrefragably de-
onſtrated.

Since therefore this way of arguing was made uſe of by Chriſt, and his
poſtles; ſince all their proofs of the doctrines by them preach'd do turn
pon this one ſuppoſition, that what may be inferr'd from the Prophets,
at is taught by the Prophets; we muſt acknowledge, that thoſe things
e fully, rightly, and ſubſtantially prov'd out of Scripture, which do
idently and neceſſarily follow from the doctrines taught in Scripture,
o' they are not directly, expreſsly, and in ſo many words, any where
be found in the Word of God.

And as we have the example of Chriſt and his Apoſtles warranting
; ſo we have their commands enjoyning us, to make uſe of this method
reaſoning. Our Saviour bids the *Jews* to *ſearch the Scriptures*; not John 5. 39.
rely to conſult them, but to compare them; not only to find what

they expreſsly, but what they implicitly, taught; not only to read what was plainly ſaid in them, but to diſcover what might manifeſtly be deduc'd from them. For by the circumſtances of the command given by our Saviour it appears, that he recommended to them the ſtudy of the Scriptures to this end, that out of them they might underſtand, that he was the *Meſſias* promis'd by God; which, as hath been ſhewn, was a truth not expreſsly taught in the Old Teſtament, but by the help of reaſoning to be deduc'd from it; ſo that it is plainly the will of our Saviour, that we ſhould ſo *ſearch the Scriptures*, as from them to learn, not only thoſe truths, which are in ſo many words expreſsly deliver'd therein, but moreover thoſe other truths, which may, by evident and eaſy deductions, be rightly inferr'd therefrom.

WHEN our Saviour in another place prov'd the reſurrection of the dead from a teſtimony of *Moſes*, in which this doctrine is not plainly aſſerted, but obſcurely implied, he charges them with error and ignorance for having not diſcover'd in the Scriptures that truth, which yet was not there expreſsly deliver'd, but covertly couch'd. He blames them for *not knowing the Scriptures*: they did *not know the Scriptures*, becauſe they did not rightly underſtand them: they miſunderſtood them, becauſe they did not, when they read them, diſcover therein the reſurrection of the dead. But in that Scripture, from whence they ought to have learn'd that the dead would riſe again, nothing was ſaid expreſsly of the reſurrection of the dead; but they ought to have known, that what was not explicitly taught therein, was however by implication there contain'd; and, for not apprehending and believing this implied truth, they are accus'd of ignorance by our Saviour.

Mark 12. 24.

WE muſt therefore own it to be our bounden duty, not only to embrace thoſe truths, which are in the book of God in ſo many words deliver'd, but alſo thoſe, which by *ſearching the Scriptures* we can there find out. Theſe may not ſo eaſily offer themſelves to our underſtandings, as others; but when they do, they are with the ſame faith and reverence to be embrac'd: as far as we have reaſon to doubt of their being rightly inferr'd from Scripture, ſo far we may doubt of their credibility; but the inference is ſometimes ſo plain and evident, that we have no reaſon to doubt, but that it is rational and juſt; and in that caſe, the truth inferr'd is to be embrac'd by us with the ſame firmneſs and readineſs of aſſent, as thoſe very truths expreſsly and directly deliver'd in Scripture, from which this conſequential truth is inferr'd. For nothing can be more unreaſonable, than to allow the Scriptures to be true and divine, and at the ſame time to queſtion the truth and divinity of thoſe doctrines, which are evidently deduc'd from the Scriptures. For ſince it is agreed on all hands, that from truth nothing can follow but what is truth, he who denies the truth of what is rightly inferr'd, doth at the ſame time impeach the truth of thoſe Scriptures, from whence it is inferr'd.

THOSE truths, which are by reaſoning inferr'd from the Scriptures, are not indeed formally contain'd in them, but they are virtually; or, to ſpeak plainer, they are not in the ſame words deliver'd, but they are in words equivalent, or of the ſame ſenſe. Now it is the ſenſe of the Scriptures we are concern'd to enquire after, and not barely the words; and we may as well doubt of the truth of this propoſition, *Jeſus was born in Bethlehem of Judea*, becauſe the inſpir'd writers did not deliver to us this doctrine in theſe very Engliſh words, but in words of their own tongue of the ſame ſignification with theſe in Engliſh, as we may

doubt

oubt of the truth of this propoſition, that Chriſt had an human ſoul,
ecauſe the Scriptures do not in ſo many words affirm that he had,
ut only teach us that he was truly man ; or of this, that the Holy
hoſt is truly God, becauſe, as ſome pretend, this doctrine is not in ſo
any words deliver'd in Scripture, when yet it is there ſaid, that thoſe
ho lied unto the Holy Ghoſt, lied unto God; *that the Spirit is the* Acts. 5. 4.
ord; and that *the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt are one.* 1 John. 5. 7.

THERE are ſeveral truths thus interpretatively included in Scripture,
hich are as eaſily diſcern'd, and which command as ready an aſſent,
thoſe which are there literally deliver'd. To ſay that *Chriſt died*
r the ſins of men, that *he gave himſelf a ranſom for ſinners*, that *he*
econcil'd them to God, that *by his death he made a propitiation for*
em, are but ſo many ſynonymous expreſſions for the ſatisfaction made
Chriſt; by this ſatisfaction we mean no other thing, than the Apoſtle,
we ſincerely believe, did mean, by his dying in our ſtead: when
erefore we allege the authority of Scripture to prove his making an
tonement for us, we do effectually prove the truth of his ſatisfaction.
hen, from a general propoſition deliver'd in Scripture, we infer the
uth of a particular included in that general; when, from Chriſt's dy-
g for all men, a Chriſtian is aſſur'd that he died for him; no one is
ſceptical as to doubt of the truth of Chriſt's dying for his ſins, be-
uſe he doth not find his own name expreſly mention'd in Scripture.
theſe caſes, and in others like theſe, the conſequence is ſo plain, and
ere is ſo little skill requir'd to make it, that there is no one ſo deſti-
te of reaſon, but can perceive the connexion of the truths not expreſ-
taught in God's Word with thoſe that are there expreſly deliver'd;
d therefore he may be as firmly aſſur'd of the former, as of the
tter.

THE holy Scriptures would not be ſo perfect a rule of faith, or of
anners; of what we ought to believe, and what we ought to do, as
ey are, if we were left to judge of either, only by what we are there
ſo many words expreſly taught, and might not uſe our own rea-
ns to infer from them ſome neceſſary truths, and ſome important du-
s, which are there, tho' not in terms deliver'd, yet in reality implied.
e would be thought very ridiculous, who ſhould plead his being un-
r no obligation from the Scriptures to obey the lawful commands of
ſovereign Princeſs, becauſe, tho' he is there requir'd to *honour the King*,
no where reads in Scripture that he is to honour the Queen: and
at man is equally abſurd, who hath no better reaſon for the denial of
Trinity, than that he no where finds the word Trinity in the Scri-
ures, tho' the doctrine by that word ſignified is therein contain'd.

BUT againſt what hath been deliver'd it may be urg'd, that if we
us give a firm aſſent to any truths, which are not plainly and expreſly
ught in Scripture, but are only inferr'd from thence by our own rea-
n, then we make our faith to depend, not upon the Word of God,
t upon our own reaſon. But it might as well be urg'd, that when
. *Paul* ſaith, that *faith cometh by hearing*, we make our faith to de- Rom. 10. 17.
end, not upon the teſtimony of God, but upon the ſenſe of hearing.
he ear is that organ or inſtrument, by which we perceive the Word
God preach'd to us; but the authority of God is that ground or rea-
n, upon which we believe the Word of God which we hear. So our
aſon, or our underſtanding, is that faculty by which we perceive and
ow what things are taught us in Scripture: by that we underſtand

the ſenſe and meaning of what is there reveal'd; but it is the authority of God, who inſpir'd the pen-men of Holy Writ, and who by the guidance of his Holy Spirit ſecur'd them from error, upon which we found our belief of what, by the uſe of our reaſon, we diſcover to be by them taught. If reaſon teaches any thing of its own; if it obtrudes its own notions for the oracles of God; if it requires our embracing a doctrine as divine, not becauſe it agrees with the Word of God, but merely becauſe it is agreeable with right reaſon; then indeed it is juſtly to be condemn'd, as invading the prerogative of God. But if thoſe things which reaſon, or, to ſpeak leſs ambiguouſly, which a man making uſe of his reaſon believes, and which he endeavours to convince others of, are either expreſsly, or by plain conſequence, taught in the Word of God; if they were truly contain'd in the Word of God, before he believ'd them; it is no fault in him to have us'd his reaſon in the diſcovery of what is taught in Scripture, or in the making that plain to others, which he plainly ſees in the Word of God. He only makes uſe of his reaſon to learn, and to teach, what the truths of God are; but doth not make his reaſon the foundation of his, or of other men's, faith.

Those who aſcribe thus much, and no more than this to reaſon, demand only the liberty of opening their own eyes, and of ſeeing the wonderful things of God's Law; they don't pretend that it is given *to them* to reveal any new truths to mankind, nor do they uſurp an unwarrantable power of framing new articles of faith. All that they demand or ask, is, that the right of making uſe of their own faculties, *which is given* to every one by nature, and by the God of nature, may not be denied to them; that they may hear and underſtand what God hath clearly and intelligibly ſpoken to all men by his Word; and that they may have the liberty to employ their reaſon in the diſcovery of what God hath reveal'd, in order to be underſtood and believ'd by them. There is no need that a man ſhould be a prophet, or that he ſhould have any extraordinary capacities of mind, or illuminations of the Spirit, to underſtand that the ſame Scriptures, which teach him that all men have ſinn'd, do conſequentially teach him that he is a ſinner; or that the Word of God, which doth expreſsly deny, that any *ſhall periſh who believe in Chriſt*, doth at the ſame time virtually pronounce that if he believes, he ſhall not periſh. To pretend that our reaſon is weak and frail, and that it is not for every man to reaſon and infer, and that it is a dangerous thing to pretend to draw conſequences from Holy Writ, and that it is ſafer to ſtick cloſe to the very letter of Scripture, and that when we once depart from that, we can never be ſecure from running into miſtakes, is to deny men to be rational creatures, to deveſt them *of common* ſenſe, and to degrade them to the level of beings utterly *deſtitute* of all underſtanding.

John. 3. 15.

But thoſe who are againſt all reaſoning from Scripture will again ask, how can we be ſure that the conſequences, which we draw from Scripture, are juſt and regular? For may not our reaſon miſguide us? And may we not, thro' miſtake, infer ſuch doctrines from Scripture, which do by no means follow from it? Did not all the hereticks of old, and do not all the falſe-teachers of our own age, pretend to prove their tenets from Scripture? Do not they, by reaſoning from what they read in Scripture, argue for the truth of their own opinions? And muſt we not allow their opinions however to be erroneous? Since therefore that reaſon, by which men argue from Scripture, is ſo apt to deceive them,

how

ow can we ever be certain that thoſe doctrines are true, which we
ink we diſcover in Scripture, by the uſe of our reaſon? Since others,
ho pretend to reaſon as well as we, are miſtaken, and are by us con-
ſs'd to be miſtaken, why may not we alſo be miſtaken, as well as they?
nd if we may be miſtaken, why ſhould we venture to believe any thing,
hich we think follows from Scripture, but which after all perhaps doth
ot follow? Had we not much better forbear making any inferences at
from Scripture, and then we ſhall be ſure not to be in the wrong?
ow if this reaſoning is good, there is an end of all certainty, not only in
oſe inferences which are made from Scripture, and which are level'd
ainſt by this ſort of arguing, but alſo in thoſe things, which are plain-
and expreſly taught in Scripture. Men have been miſtaken in their
dgments concerning things formally deliver'd in the Word of God, as
ell as in their arguments drawn from the Word of God; and if we
uſt never depend upon the inferences we make from Scripture, becauſe
me have thought that they have argued right from God's Word, when
ey have argued wrong, we can never depend upon the apprehenſions
form of what the Scriptures do expreſly teach, becauſe ſome have
iſunderſtood them, who thought they underſtood them right.

ACCORDING to this ſuppoſition, we muſt doubt of what is taught
in all other ſciences, as well as of what is deduc'd from the Word
God. Some have made wrong judgments in phyſick, and have took
e diſtemper for another; and therefore we can never have any cer-
n rule to diſtinguiſh a phrenſie from a lethargy. We are ſometimes
iſtaken in the figure and ſize of what we ſee, or in the qualities of
at we taſt and feel; and therefore we can never be ſure that we per-
ive the difference between white and black, hot and cold, ſweet and
tter. Some have made wrong concluſions in Mathematicks; and there-
re we cannot be ſure of any one propoſition in *Euclid*. Some have
ferr'd that the Biſhop of *Rome* is ſupreme head of the Catholick Church,
om our Lord's ſaying to *Peter, feed my ſheep*; and others have argued John 21. 16.
his having civil as well as ſpiritual juriſdiction, from the ſame A-
ſtle's telling Chriſt, *Lord behold here are two ſwords*; and therefore Luke 22. 38.
may be miſtaken, when we infer that the Paſtors of Chriſt's Church
ve any authority at all over the people, from the command given by
e Apoſtle to the *Hebrews*, *Obey them that have the rule over you, and* Heb. 13. 17.
bmit your ſelves, for they watch for your ſouls, as they that muſt give
count. If indeed all men did reaſon as wildly and extravagantly, as
oſe perſons do, who, from ſome men's having been miſtaken in the
ncluſions which they have drawn from Scriptures, do raſhly infer, that
can never be ſure of any concluſions which we make therefrom; it
ould be very dangerous truſting their reaſon to draw any conſequen-
s from the Word of God; but ſince our reaſon may be rightly uſ'd,
o' others have abuſ'd theirs; ſince, as it is poſſible to be miſtaken in
r reaſoning, ſo it is poſſible alſo to avoid miſtakes; ſince we may know
e occaſions which have led others into error, and may our ſelves take
re to prevent the like; it is no good objection againſt reaſoning from
cripture to allege, that ſome have reaſon'd wrong from Scripture, and
ave been led into dangerous errors thereby.

BUT will it not be ſaid, that if there is any occaſion for our drawing
nferences from Scripture, then it is plain, that the Scriptures are not ſo
aſie and clear as they are by the *Proteſtants* generally ſaid to be? If we
uſt not only believe what we read in Scripture, but what can be prov'd

from thence, then none will be able to know what is taught in Scripture, but ſuch as have skill in drawing conſequences; and at this rate we muſt be skill'd in Logick, before we can pretend to *underſtand the Scriptures.* Hab. 2. 2. Are not the Scripures ſo plain, that *he who runs may read*? And how then is this conſiſtent with what hath been now deliver'd about our being requir'd to believe ſuch doctrines, as a man muſt uſe comparing, reaſoning, and inferring, before he can find them to be contain'd in Scripture? To this I anſwer, that thoſe are very much miſtaken, who think that we, who maintain the perſpicuity of the Scriptures, do aſſert them to be ſo eaſie, as that there ſhould be no uſe of our rational faculties rightly to underſtand them.

We don't affirm that all things are ſo plain and clear in Scripture, that they may be underſtood by every reader without pains, or without calling in the aſſiſtance of others: we own, that there are many paſſages in Scripture which cannot be underſtood by private unlearn'd Chriſtians without, and ſome that cannot perhaps be rightly underſtood even with, the help of an interpreter. What St. *Peter* ſaith of the Epiſtles of St. 2 Pet. 3. 16. *Paul*, we believe of other parts of Holy Writ, that *there are ſome things in them hard to be underſtood*; and we don't contend that every thing therein deliver'd is ſuited to the apprehenſions of all readers, but only that thoſe things, which all are indiſpenſably bound to know for their ſouls health, are by all, upon the uſe of due diligence, intelligible. We diſtinguiſh therefore betwixt things neceſſary, and not neceſſary to be known in order to everlaſting ſalvation: the former we think clearly *reveal'd*, ſo that they may by all be rightly underſtood; the other we think we may, without peril of damnation, be miſtaken in; and may therefore allow, that about ſuch things we may be more apt to be miſtaken. In the former caſe there would be great danger to our ſouls from a miſtake, and therefore the Scriptures are ſo plain, that there is no danger of a miſtake: in the latter caſe the Scriptures may not be ſo clear, but there may be danger of a miſtake; but then the matters are not of that weight and moment, that there ſhould be great danger from a miſtake.

And even as to thoſe truths, which are neceſſarily to be known in order to our everlaſting ſalvation, we don't affirm, that wherever they are deliver'd in Scripture, they are expreſs'd in ſuch terms, as to leave no room for a miſtake; but that ſome where or other in Holy Writ, they are ſo expreſs'd, that it muſt be our own fault, if we do not rightly apprehend them. We believe, for inſtance, that the incarnation of Chriſt, his paſſion, and reſurrection are taught by the Prophets, as well as by the Apoſtles; but we don't believe that they are ſo explicitly and fully reveal'd by the Prophets, as by the Apoſtles. What is obſcurely *hinted* in the Old Teſtament, is manifeſtly explain'd in the New; what one inſpir'd author delivers in the New Teſtament in words liable to ambiguity, another may expreſs in terms, the ſenſe of which is more determin'd; what any of the holy pen-men do at one time, and in one place, teach leſs plainly, that the very ſame writer may at another time, and in another place, teach with greater plainneſs and perſpicuity. We don't therefore affirm that all the Scriptures are equally clear; that the Old Teſtament is as eaſie to be underſtood as the New; that the Epiſtles of the New are as intelligible as the Goſpels; that one Evangeliſt is always as eaſie to be underſtood as another; that the ſame Evangeliſt is always equally intelligible; but that there are ſcatter'd thro' the Holy Writ truths ſo expreſly, ſo fully, ſo perſpicuouſly deliver'd, that

all

all Chriſtians who are not utterly deſtitute of underſtanding, are capable of forming a right apprehenſion concerning them. They may be ſo fully ſatisfied of what is there taught, as to entertain no doubt about it, tho' they may not be able to anſwer all the cavils, that may be rais'd gainſt it.

And when we affirm that the Scriptures are in ſome points thus plain, eaſie, and intelligible by all Chriſtians, we don't pretend that they nay be underſtood without attention, diligence, and enquiry; but that ve may be capable of knowing their ſenſe with the uſe of theſe, and ther proper methods of gaining inſtruction. Some truths indeed are ritten in ſo large characters, that *he that runs may read them*: we need nly to open our eyes, and the light will dart in upon us: in the pereption of theſe we are as it were purely paſſive: we need not be at any ains to apprehend them; it is enough that we don't take pains to miſnderſtand them: but for the diſcovery of other truths reveal'd in Scripture, the words, by which they are convey'd to our underſtandings, re to be carefully weigh'd; the ſenſe of them to be nicely and accuratey enquir'd into; the context to be duly conſider'd; the occaſion of them o be diligently heeded; parallel places of Scripture to be conſulted; the eeming repugnances of theſe truths with others to be reconcil'd; the nalogy of faith to be regarded; the difficulties that may be urg'd againſt hem to be remov'd; all paſſions and prejudices, that may any ways iaſs our judgments, are to be laid aſide. In the underſtanding of ſuch ruths as theſe there being more room for miſtake, there is more occaon for our caution; and the way which we are to go being a little ore intricate, it will be proper for us to take in the aſſiſtance of a uide. What of our ſelves we could not diſcover, we may be able to erceive when diſcover'd to us by others; in which caſe we don't implitly follow the judgment of thoſe whom we conſult, but have our own dgments inform'd by theirs: we don't ſee with other men's eyes; but hoſe truths, which before were obſcure to us, are by others, of greater enetration than our ſelves, plac'd in ſo clear a light, that we may now ainly perceive them with our own eyes: we don't in ſuch a caſe folw our inſtructors, as blind men do their guides, truſting to their guiance without ſeeing which way they go; but we make ſuch uſe of em, as perſons in the dark do of thoſe who carry a light before them, ſhew them the way, and to direct their paths.

It is no argument therefore againſt the clearneſs of Scripture, that very private Chriſtian is not able always to underſtand it, without the elp of a teacher, any more than it is a good proof that *Tully* is an obure writer, becauſe every ſmatterer in *Latin* is not capable of underanding him, without ſometimes calling in for aid a good expoſitor. od hath appointed Paſtors and Teachers in his Church to explain his Vord; to open the ſenſe of it, and to lead the faithful into the knowdge of his laws; he hath ordain'd that *the prieſts lips ſhould keep knowdge*, and that the people *ſhould ſeek the law at their mouths.* They e the *meſſengers of the Lord of hoſts*, and are to deliver no other meſge than what the Lord hath ſent: if they, to whom the meſſage is ſent, e ſometimes at a loſs to know the purport of it, they who bring it may e able to explain it; and that meſſage cannot be ſaid to be in it ſelf bſcure, which moſt are able to underſtand without, and all are able o underſtand with, the help of ſuch an explication.

Mal. 2. 7.

Now ſince thoſe who affirm that the Scriptures are clear, and eaſie to be underſtood, do not pretend that they are in all parts equally clear; ſince, at the ſame time that they aſſert them to be eaſie, they don't exclude, but ſuppoſe, the uſe of our rational faculties in the right underſtanding of them; ſince what may be eaſily inferr'd from Scripture, is almoſt as eaſily underſtood, as what is taught expreſsly in Scripture; when we contend for our being oblig'd to believe ſuch inferences, as are plainly drawn from the Word of God, we do no ways impeach the doctrine of the *Reform'd* Churches concerning the perſpicuity of Holy Writ.

HAVING thus prov'd the doctrine at firſt laid down from the authority of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and having defended it from the objections that may be made againſt it, I come at laſt to apply it, in a very few words, to the myſteries of our faith, and particularly to the doctrine of the Trinity, which ought to be the ſubject of this day's contemplation.

IT muſt be own'd, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is propos'd in our Articles, our Liturgy, our Creeds, is not in ſo many words taught us in the holy Scripture. What we profeſs in our prayers, we no where read in Scripture, that the one God, the one Lord, is not one only perſon, but three perſons in one ſubſtance. There is no ſuch text in Scripture as this, that, "the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is "to be worſhipped". No one of the inſpir'd writers hath expreſsly affirm'd, that "in the Trinity none is afore, or after other; none is greater, "or leſs than another; but the whole three perſons are co-eternal toge"ther, and co-equal." But altho' theſe truths are not read in Scripture; yet they may eaſily, regularly, and undeniably be inferr'd from Scripture. If indeed it can be ſhewn, that theſe inferences are wrong, they may ſafely be rejected; but they ought not to be rejected for no other reaſon but this, that they are not plain aſſertions of Scripture, but bare inferences from it. Theſe truths, tho' they are not in Scripture deliver'd in the ſame terms, yet are there deliver'd in other terms of the ſame import and ſignification. There would be no neceſſity of our uſing any other language, but that which the Scripture hath us'd, had not hereticks put a wrong ſenſe upon the words of Scripture, which is repugnant Joh. 10. 30. to other paſſages of Scripture. Our Saviour ſaith in Scripture, that *He and the Father are one*; this unity the Heretick underſtands, not of an unity of nature, but of conſent; they are both one, ſaith he, becauſe they agree together. We declare therefore our belief of their being one, not only in conſent, for ſo we our ſelves alſo may be one with God, but in nature, leſt we ſhould derogate from the eternal Godhead of the Son, which is in other Scriptures expreſsly declar'd. We do not therefore add any thing by thoſe terms, which we make uſe of, to that which the Scripture hath taught; but we vindicate the true ſenſe of Scripture from the falſe gloſſes of deceivers.

I HAVE not time now to prove, that every thing which we believe, and teach, concerning the Trinity, may be eaſily inferr'd from the Scriptures; that hath been done frequently, and irrefragably, by ancient and modern writers: the deſign of the preſent diſcourſe hath been only to remove ſuch prejudices, as might be entertain'd againſt this kind of Jude 3. proof. Let us therefore *earneſtly contend for the faith, which was once deliver'd unto the ſaints*. Let us not be ſeduc'd by the vain ſophiſms of thoſe, who lie in wait to deceive: but as by our baptiſm we have dedicated our ſelves to the ſervice of the holy Trinity; ſo let us maintain the faith, into which we were then baptiz'd, and perſevere in that obedience to the Trinity, which we then vow'd, unto our lives end.

SERMON XXXIV.

The Folly of Double-mindedneſs.

JAMES IV. 8.

----- *Purifie your hearts, ye Double-minded.*

The firſt ſermon on this Text.

THERE are few Sinners ſo deſperately wicked, few ſo entirely under the dominion of Satan, but they have ſome faint ineffectual tendencies towards that which is good; ſome ſecret remorſes of conſcience for their ſins; ſome ſtruglings to ſhake off that yoke, which tho' they are in-
d much to, yet doth not altogether ſit eaſie upon them, but galls and
ts them, and makes them often deſirous to throw it off. And on the
her ſide, there are few Saints ſo uniformly holy, ſo entirely addicted
the intereſts of virtue and religion, as not to feel in themſelves ſome
ong inclinations to that which is evil: even whilſt they are ſoaring up
wards heaven, there is a dead weight hangs about them, which retards
eir flight, hinders their getting higher, and is ſometimes ſo powerful,
to preſs them downwards, and to make them on a ſudden fall from
e height, to which they had with great labour and difficulty arriv'd;
d to which they muſt not hope to riſe again, but by very ſlow and
ſurely degrees.

UNIFORMITY in vice, without any the leaſt mixture of good, is
rhaps the particular character of the devils, or damn'd below; and per-
ction of holineſs, without the leaſt allay of impurity, if it be not above
e reach of any mere creature, is yet at leaſt confin'd to the inhabi-
nts of heaven, the angels who never ſinn'd, or *the ſpirits of juſt men
ade perfect*. Betwixt the higheſt pitch of virtue, and the loweſt point
vice, there is a vaſt interval, which admits of a great variety of de-
ees; the bottom of this ladder goes down as low as hell, *and the top
it reaches up to heaven, and the* ſons of men are conſtantly *aſcending
d deſcending on it*; ſome mounting upwards, and making perpetually
arer and nearer approaches towards the higheſt heavens; ſome tending
ownwards, and, by a gradual progreſs in vice, ſinking apace to the ne-

thermoſt parts of hell. But the aſcent of the former would be much more eaſie, more ſpeedy, more uniform, than uſually it is, if thoſe, who are to climb up this ſcale of virtue, would have the higheſt top of it always in their view; would ſummon together all their ſtrength, exert their utmoſt vigour, put their faculties to the full ſtretch, to reach it; would never ſuffer their endeavours after it to ceaſe, never to be intermitted, never ſo much as to be ſlackned; but would, without interruption, without wearineſs, without fainting, *preſs towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus.* Phil. 3. 14.

BUT this conſtant progreſs in the paths of virtue, this gradual approach to the gates of heaven, this *going on from ſtrength to ſtrength, till we appear before God in Sion,* is not to be hop'd for, whilſt we are wavering and unſteady; whilſt we look different ways, and purſue different ends; whilſt the faculties of our ſouls are divided, and their ſtrength thereby impair'd; whilſt we mix heaven and earth together; would unite the oppoſite intereſts of this world and the next; *reconcile Chriſt and Belial, and eſtabliſh a communion betwixt light and darkneſs*; whilſt we ſhare our obedience betwixt God and Satan, and give them a copartnerſhip of dominion over us; whilſt we ſtrive to make up the quarrel betwixt the fleſh and the ſpirit, by allowing each to prevail and govern in its turn; in ſhort, whilſt we are at variance with our ſelves, are diſtracted in our own thoughts, counſels, and purpoſes, and live as incongruouſly and inconſiſtently, as if we had more than one mind, and were actuated by two quite oppoſite and repugnant ſouls. Pſal. 84. 7. 2 Cor. 14. 15.

WHAT is meant by a double-minded perſon, we cannot be at a loſs to know, ſince St. *James* hath given us his character in this Epiſtle chap. I. v. 8. *A double-minded man is unſtable in all his ways.* He is one, who is unconſtant, and unſteady; he is fickle, and changeable; he hath a mind to ſerve God and be ſav'd, but he hath at the ſame time a mind alſo to ſatisfie his luſts; he would be eternally happy in the next world, but he would not quit the ſenſual pleaſures of this; he is godly by fits and by intervals, but he is not ſo conſtantly, uniformly, and uninterruptedly; his religion hath its flows, and its ebbs; it riſes, and it falls; now it grows, and preſently again it decays; it doth not ſhine forth, as the ſun, with an even, regular, and uniform light, but, like the moon, it puts on different aſpects and faces, and as it is ſome times in the increaſe, ſo at other times it is ſure to be in the wane.

TO give us a more lively and ſenſible image of this inſtability, which is the diſtinguiſhing mark of a double-minded man, our Apoſtle paints him out to us by a familiar, but elegant compariſon; *he that wavereth is like to a wave of the ſea, driven by the wind and toſſed.* This repreſentation of him is as old as the *Patriach Jacob*, who, in alluſion to this quality of unconſtancy, which he obſerv'd in his *firſt-born Reuben*, calls him *unſtable as water.* Water in its own nature is unquiet and unſteady; its parts, we are told by the naturaliſts, are in a conſtant hurry and agitation; there is always in it, if not an actual motion, yet a diſpoſition to be quickly and eaſily mov'd; and, upon the leaſt impreſſion from without, it is preſently ſhaken and diſturb'd. Now, as apt as water is to be mov'd by the force and impulſe of the wind, and to flow one way or the other, as that ſhall chance to turn; ſo apt is a double-minded perſon to alter his choice and reſolutions; to change his opinions and deſigns; to be carried different ways, and, having no ground of ſtability within himſelf, to be mov'd towards diverſe ends, according to the variety of impreſſions c. 1. 6. Gen. 49. 4.

from

from outward objects. And therefore our Apoſtle doth not content himſelf with comparing him, as the Patriarch *Jacob* had done, to *water*, but he improves that thought, and aptly reſembles him *to a wave of the ſea driven by the wind*.

THE ground of this inſtability is the diverſity of thoſe principles, pon which he acts; his heart is not pure and free from mixture, and herefore his actions are thus repugnant. He hath a double mind, a ouble ſoul, and therefore nothing that he doth can be ſimple and uniorm. To remove this inconſiſtency and incongruity, which there is bewixt what he at ſeveral times doth, his heart muſt be purified, muſt be urg'd from all ſecular and low aims, and entirely be fix'd on the choice f one ſingle end, and ſteadily apply it ſelf to the uſe of ſuch means, as ll joyntly conſpire to the attainment of that end. What therefore ur Apoſtle means by purity of heart, in oppoſition to double-mindedeſs, is that ſingleneſs of mind or ſimplicity of intention, whereby we ive up our ſelves entirely to the ſervice of God, and to the purſuit of ur eternal happineſs, without propoſing to our ſelves any ends that inrfere with this, or allowing our ſelves in any practices that may hiner us in this purſuit. When we make the glory of God, and the ſalation of our ſouls our laſt and chief end; when we form no other degns that come in competition with this; when we purſue this one ſine end ſteadily, conſtantly, and uniformly; when all our actions are order'd, as to have a proper tendency to this end; and do all agree ith each other by agreeing together in this tendency; then have we at purity of heart, which our Apoſtle here enjoyns.

NOW, in order to preſs upon you an earneſt endeavour after this exllent qualification of ſoul, I ſhall ſhew,

I. THE folly of purſuing oppoſite ends, that this ſingleneſs of heart may recommend it ſelf to your choice, on account of the wiſdom it argues.

II. THE uneaſineſs of purſuing oppoſite ends, that this ſimplicity of intention may appear to you ſtill farther deſirable, in regard of the pleaſure that attends it.

III. THE ſinfulneſs of aiming at ſuch oppoſite ends, that this purity of heart may recommend it ſelf to your practice, in reſpect of its abſolute and indiſpenſable neceſſity to your eternal ſalvation.

Firſt THEN I am to ſhew the folly of purſuing oppoſite ends, that is ſingleneſs of heart may recommend it ſelf to your choice, on acunt of the wiſdom it argues.

SHOULD we obſerve a perſon at the ſame time taking aim at two fferent marks plac'd at a conſiderable diſtance, and much more, if they ere plac'd diametrically oppoſite to one another, we muſt be more than rdinarily ſerious, if ſuch a ſight did not move our ſpleen, and provoke ur laughter. And yet every whit as ridiculous is that perſon, who ropoſes to himſelf ſuch deſigns, as do plainly interfere with each other. or is it not the height of folly to aim at any end, which we are ſure ever to accompliſh? And muſt not he that purſues oppoſite ends, neeſſarily fall ſhort of one of them? For will not all thoſe means, that ontribute to the gaining one, hinder the attainment of the other? As e ends are oppoſite, ſo muſt not thoſe ſeveral ways, that tend to thoſe nds, be oppoſite alſo? Can therefore one way be choſen in order to carry us towards one end, without its placing us at a diſtance from the other? Nay, may we not more probably, by aiming at both, fall ſhort of both? For may we not uſe ſuch means towards acquiring one, which, for want of a conſtant, ſteady, and uniform application, may be ineffectual to our compaſſing that; and yet at the ſame time be ſufficient to hinder us from attaining the other? They are ſuppos'd to be both of that nature, as not to be attainable but by conſtancy and perſeverance: but neither of them is purſued regularly, neither of them is follow'd with aſſiduity; both of them therefore, for want of an uniform purſuit, will be plac'd beyond our reach.

It is a very good rule, which an Heathen Moraliſt gives to thoſe, who apply themſelves to the ſtudy of philoſophy, that "if they deſire "ſo great things as philoſophy promiſes, they muſt not be moderate in "the deſire of them, nor apply themſelves to them with indifferency. "For if they propoſe to themſelves that calmneſs of ſoul which philo"ſophy promiſes, and at the ſame time hunt after honours and riches, "it is very probable they will fall ſhort of theſe, becauſe they deſir'd "the former; but it is certain that they will miſs the former, thro' an "unſeaſonable purſuit of theſe." Now what he ſaith of philoſophy, is much more applicable to the Chriſtian Religion: for the ſeverer its rules are, the greater application of mind it requires. The happineſs, which our Religion promiſes, is far more excellent, than what philoſophy could propoſe to its diſciples; and therefore better deſerves to be contended for with the whole ſtrength of our ſouls. The common methods of attaining honours and riches are more ſtrictly and under ſeverer penalties forbidden by revelation, than by unaſſiſted reaſon; and the reſtraint which is laid upon us by our Religion being greater, the more we live up to the rules of the Goſpel, the more we ſhall debar our ſelves of the undue advantages and forbidden pleaſures of the world; and, on the other ſide, as far as in any forbidden inſtances we ſeek theſe advantages and pleaſures, the more certain we may be, that we ſhall be ſhut out from all hopes of everlaſting happineſs.

To deſire an uninterrupted courſe of happineſs, without any the leaſt allay of miſery; to wiſh that this ſtate of happineſs may ſoon commence, and may never end, is the higheſt degree of wiſdom; and conſequently, as far as preſent happineſs is conſiſtent with future; as far as the pleaſures of this life do not interfere with thoſe of the life to come; ſo far a wiſe man may, without forfeiting the opinion of his wiſdom, rationally purſue them. But the folly of the inconſiſtent actor, which we are now concern'd to expoſe, diſplays it ſelf in his aiming ſo far at eternal glory, as to do ſeveral things deſtructive to his worldly intereſt, in order to attain it; and at the ſame time being ſo much ſet upon the good things of this world, as to allow himſelf in the practice of ſeveral ſins deſtructive of ſalvation, rather than fall ſhort of them. There are ſeveral graces, to which the promiſe of eternal life is made, and theſe he takes great pains to enrich his ſoul with, that he may be partaker of that promiſe; at the ſame time there are ſeveral vices, to which he finds everlaſting perdition threatned, and yet he indulges himſelf in an habitual courſe of theſe. He is as ſure that theſe threats are denounc'd againſt the one, as that theſe promiſes are vouchſaf'd to the other; he knows that God's veracity is as much concern'd to execute his threats, as it is to make good his promiſes; he doth ſome things in hopes of attaining the promiſes, he doth other things, whereby he is ſure to incur

he threats; he knows that to be the heir of the promiſes, and to be
ubject to the threats, is utterly incompatible; and yet, as if he hoped
o reconcile contradictions, he obeys God's commands, that he may
ain heaven, and he diſobeys God's laws, for which he knows he ſhall
e condemn'd to hell.

IT is deſervedly look'd upon as a great weakneſs of mind for a man
o contradict himſelf; to affirm what he before denied, or to deny what
e before affirm'd. Now, as there is a contradiction in words, ſo there
alſo in our actions: theſe may be as inconſiſtent, as repugnant to each
ther, as thoſe; and the repugnance in this caſe is much more abſurd,
han in the former. Precipitancy of thought, and haſtineſs to ſpeak,
efore we have well weigh'd what we ſay, may betray us ſometimes in-
the uttering of contradictions; and this raſhneſs, tho' a fault, yet in
me matters of leſs moment may not be wholly unexcuſable. But in
etermining within our ſelves what ſhall be the chief end, at which
our actions ſhall aim, we are never ſuppos'd, at leaſt, I am ſure, we
e never allow'd, to be in haſt: what end is moſt worthy our purſuit,
d what means are moſt conducive to that end, are enquiries of too
eat moment to be determin'd haſtily. When therefore we have re-
lv'd upon heaven, as our chief good, and have pitch'd upon univerſal
bedience to the laws of God, as the only poſſible means to arrive at
aven; then to tranſgreſs thoſe laws, and to do ſuch things, for which
e are ſure to be excluded from heaven, is not to be accounted for by
y excuſable haſtineſs and levity of mind.

FORGETFULNESS is another cauſe of men's contradicting them-
lves in their diſcourſes: what they before ſaid is ſlipt out of their me-
ories; and therefore the contrariety of what they now ſay, to what
ey once ſaid, but have forgot, eaſily eſcapes them. But now can
y man forget, that it was once the reigning deſire of his ſoul to be
ernally happy? Is eternal happineſs a matter of ſo little moment, as
at when it was once thought of, it made but a ſlight impreſſion on
e mind, ſo that the memory of it ſhould be quite effac'd? Can any
e drink ſo deep of the cup of oblivion, as to forget that he hath an
mortal ſoul, which muſt live or periſh everlaſtingly? Doth not the in-
nſiſtent actor feel in himſelf ſome violent ſtrugglings of his conſcience,
hen he deliberates about the commiſſion of any known ſin? And do
t theſe remind him, that there is an heaven, which he is in danger
forfeiting, and an hell, which he is afraid of falling into? Is he not apt
ſet his good deeds againſt his evil ones, that the fancied merit of thoſe
ay atone for the demerit of theſe? And can he do this without con-
dering the end for which he perform'd thoſe good actions? His con-
adicting himſelf therefore in doing what, when he doth, his conſcience
ndemns, as it is not to be ſolv'd by any pardonable levity; ſo nei-
er is it to be accounted for by any forgetfulneſs, which ſhould ex-
ſe, or ſo much as extenuate, the guilt of it.

ANOTHER ground, that may be aſſign'd for men's contradicting
emſelves in what they ſay, is their inability to judge aright of ſome
rt of contradictions. Some indeed are open and plain, and lie level
all capacities; but others are more involv'd and diſguis'd, and there-
re may eſcape the diſcovery of leſs diſcerning perſons, without any
eat imputation upon their wiſdom. But that contradiction in acting,
ncerning which we now treat, is always groſs, plain, and palpable:
e narrow path which leads unto life, and the broad way which leads

to deſtruction, do not lie ſo cloſe together, nor are they ſo like to each other, as that it is eaſy to confound and miſtake them. What thoſe graces are, by which we muſt hope, thro' the merits of Chriſt, to arrive at heaven; and what thoſe ſins are, for which we muſt expect, thro' the juſt judgment of God, to be thrown into hell; is in ſuch fair and legible characters ſet forth in the holy Scripture, that he who has once thought it his duty and intereſt to adorn his ſoul with thoſe graces, in order to the fruition of God, cannot but know he contradicts himſelf, as often as he ſuffers his ſoul to be ſtain'd with thoſe pollutions, which render him abominable in the ſight of the moſt Holy. As much therefore as a deliberate, known, palpable contradiction is more ſcandalous, and betrays more folly, than an unobſerv'd, haſty, and ſcarce diſcernable repugnancy; ſo much more ridiculous, and more unpardonably fooliſh is it for men by aiming at oppoſite ends, and making one claſh with the other, to contradict themſelves in what they do, than it is to contradict themſelves in what they ſay. Thoſe, who in ſpeaking contradict themſelves, are ſure to be in the right one way, or the other; but thoſe, who in their actions thus thwart themſelves, are both ways in the wrong; if they were ſure to attain either of the oppoſite ends they aim at, their folly were leſs extravagant; but whilſt, by a medly purſuit of both, they take effectual care to miſs both, their ſtupidity is inexpreſſible.

In the ſeveral works of art, there is nothing which more ſhews *the* skill of the artificer, than unity of deſign; this is the firſt rule laid down by thoſe, who give directions for the learning any art; and this is the main thing look'd after by thoſe, who would excel in it. Whether a picture is to be drawn, or a poem to be compos'd, or a building to be fram'd, the contriver's firſt buſineſs is to form in his fancy what he deſigns: this he takes care to have in his view thro' the whole courſe of his work; all the parts of it are ſo order'd, as to contribute to the execution of this deſign; it is not ſufficient, that taken ſeparately and apart from each other, they are form'd aright, but there muſt be a dependence one upon the other, and all muſt together conſpire to make one regular, uniform, and finiſh'd piece. But be the parts in themſelves never ſo beautiful, be they drawn never ſo exactly; yet if they are confuſedly jumbled together, if they have no proportion to each other, if they do not come in the right places, if they do not contribute to the carrying on one and the ſame deſign; the whole is condemn'd by men of judgment, and the author juſtly cenſur'd as not maſter of that art he profeſſes. The art, which all Chriſtians do, or ſhould, profeſs, is that of living well: *this* art, as well as all others, hath its end at which it aims; and its rules, by following of which this end is to be accompliſh'd: the ſeveral parts of our life ought to be ſo order'd, as all to conſpire to this end: *Denique ſit quodvis ſimplex duntaxat & unum*, is as fundamental a rule in living, as it is in any artful compoſure. Whatever we do in the whole courſe of our life, tho' in it ſelf it may look ſpeciouſly; yet if it do not tend to this end, is out of its place, and irregular. But if we would excel in this art of living; if we would have our wiſdom approv'd by thoſe, who are to be the ſpectators of our performance, by men and by angels; if we expect that our work ſhould bear the trial of God the judge of all; we muſt take care, that the ſeveral actions of our life be even and of a piece; that there be a conſent of the parts, and an agreeable harmony between them; that not only each be unexceptionable in its kind, but that taken altogether

ther they jointly conſpire to the carrying on the main deſign of our living here, as to be eternally happy hereafter.

But that which ſhews moſt the wiſdom of propoſing one ſingle end, d directing all things to that end, is, that this is the method which infi- te wiſdom it ſelf obſerves in all its works, and by nothing more ſhews ſelf to be infinite, than by thus obſerving it. The beautiful frame of is world is an invincible proof of the inimitable ſkill of its Almighty reator; and the perfection of this work is in nothing more conſpicuous, an in the order and ſymmetry of its parts, and their being all ſo put gether, as that they make one uniform and regular ſyſtem. The glo- of God is that end for which all things are made; and there is no one rt of the univerſe, which doth not, in its place and ſtation, contribute mething to the advancement of this end: *The heavens declare the glo- of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy-work*: *fire and hail, ſnow d vapours, ſtorms and winds fulfil his word.* And there is no creature deform'd in our ſight, which adds not to the beauty; none ſo ſeeming- hurtful, which contributes not to the ſafety; none in appearance ſo eleſs, which miniſters not to the advantage, of the entire fabrick. the motions of ſeveral bodies never ſo oppoſite, be the natures of em never ſo different, be their qualities never ſo repugnant; yet all th a wonderful amity ſweetly agree to carry on one and the ſame de- n. As in muſical inſtruments, as in ſinging, ſounds in themſelves moſt like may, by a ſkilful artiſt, be ſo temper'd together, that from that ry diſcord there ſhall ariſe a melodious harmony; ſo hath the wiſ- m of God in forming the univerſe contriv'd all things in ſuch a won- rful manner, that by the very jarring and quarrel of the creatures the der and peace of the creation is continually preſerv'd.

Pſal. 19. 1.

Pſal. 148. 8.

And as God hath ſhew'd himſelf a God of order in the works of the eation; ſo hath he exemplified to us the wiſdom of acting by one prin- le, and aiming at one deſign, in the no leſs wonderful work of our demption. Ever ſince the ſcheme of redeeming loſt man was firſt d, all things have work'd together for the accompliſhing this great de- n. There is nothing which infinite goodneſs could beſtow, nothing ich infinite wiſdom could contrive, nothing which infinite power uld effect, but has been done for the carrying on this one purpoſe of Almighty. He, who ſhall carefully obſerve what a wonderful cor- ſpondence there is between the Old Teſtament, and the New; be- een the types, and the antitypes; between the accidents of their lives o prefigur'd Chriſt, and the circumſtances of our Saviour's life; he, who all impartially conſider what a combination of events there muſt be to ke way for the birth of our Saviour, at ſuch a determin'd point of time d place; and ſhall at the ſame time call to mind, that if any one link this chain had fail'd, the whole deſign had been fruſtrate; as he will ſatisfied that it muſt be the work of God; ſo from the correſpondency thoſe wonderful methods, which God us'd for the accompliſhment of is work, and their joynt tendency to one and the ſame end, he will convinc'd, that unity of deſign, and uniformity of action, muſt be a eat part of human wiſdom; ſince it is that, which is moſt remarkable the moſt wonderful effect, that ever was wrought by the incompre- nſible wiſdom of God.

And now let us ponder theſe things duly and ſeriouſly in our hearts. et us conſider the extravagant folly of propoſing to our ſelves oppo- te ends, of traverſing different ways, and ſerving different maſters:

Let us compare together theſe ends, and ſee whether they are alike deſirable, ſo as equally to engage our affections: Let us conſider whither theſe ſeveral ways tend, and whether it is indifferent to us which we tread. Let us examine the pleas that theſe ſeveral maſters make to our obedience, and ſee whether they have an equal right to command us: Let us conſider the ſeveral ſorts of work, in which they employ us, whether they be equally fit for us to be employ'd in; and the ſeveral ſorts of wages they promiſe, whether they are equally worth our labouring for.

If the pleaſures of this world are more ſuited to our natures; if they are more agreeable to our rational faculties; if they are more ſolid and durable; if they are more perfect whilſt they laſt; and if they laſt longer than thoſe we expect in the world to come; let us purſue theſe ſteadily, let us ſeek them conſtantly, let us enjoy them freely, without troubling our ſelves for any thing beyond them: Let us not rob our ſelves of any of the preſent ſatisfactions of this life, in expectation of leſſer joys at a greater diſtance. Or if the pleaſures of this world, tho' they do not exceed, yet are truly equal to the pleaſures of the next; if, having weigh'd them together in an even balance, we find that neither of them turns the ſcale; if one hath as ſtrong charms to attract our love, as the other; then let us live at all adventures: where there is no room for preference, let us take either ſide, as it happens: Let us *ſet our affections on things above*, or *on things below*; be godly, or prophane; ſober, or intemperate; righteous, or unjuſt; merciful, or uncharitable, according as we are in humour. Let us practiſe ſome duties to comply with the motions of the Spirit, and commit ſome ſins to gratify the luſts of the fleſh; and having no certain haven where we would be, let us ſuffer our thoughts and inclinations to run afloat, and to be toſs'd about to any point of the compaſs by every blaſt of wind.

But if neither of theſe be the true ſtate of our caſe, as, if the Chriſtian Religion be true, we are ſure neither is; if the advantages and pleaſures *of this preſent time are not worthy to be compar'd with the glory, that ſhall be reveal'd*; if they are diſproportion'd to our faculties; if they are baſe and inglorious; if they are inſipid and unſatisfactory; if they are ſhort, and periſh in the enjoyment; if they are mix'd with an allay of bitterneſs; if the purſuit of them will debar us from the hopes of an happineſs, more ſuited to our capacities, more adapted to the dignity of our nature; more reliſhing and ſatisfactory; more pure and unmixt; more entire and uninterrupted; more firm and durable; nay farther, if the ſeeking of the things of this world, either more than the glories of the next, or equally with them, will ſhut us out of the kingdom of God; and if on the other ſide, to thoſe who *firſt ſeek the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs, theſe things ſhall be added* over and above; where there is ſuch a vaſt diſparity in the objects, where the diſpute lies between the creature and the Creator, between finite and infinite, between momentary and eternal; there to be equally pois'd between ſuch unequal objects; to give as large a ſhare of our affections to that which is the leaſt, as to that which is the moſt deſirable; and in ſhort, for the want of a conſtant, ſteady, and uniform purſuit of the better part, to loſe both parts, is ſuch a degree of folly, as in ſpeculation we could never have believ'd poſſible, had not the practice of men ſhew'd it to be very common.

If therefore we would clear our ſelves from the imputation of the
igheſt folly; if we would approve our ſelves truly wiſe, or, which
all one, *wiſe unto ſalvation*; let us no longer *halt between two opi-*
ions: if Mammon be God, let us follow him; but if the Lord be God,
t us follow him. Let us be afraid of the wo denounc'd againſt fearful
earts and ſaint hands, and the ſinner that goes two ways: Let us con-
der that the holy Scripture hath made it the character of hypocrites,
at they have a double heart; but that to thoſe, to whom God hath
romis'd, that *they ſhall be his people, and* that *he will be their God,* Jer. 32. 38.
hath at the ſame time promis'd, that *he will give them one heart,*
d one way, that they may fear him for ever. God is ſimple and un-
vided, and therefore is to be worſhipp'd with ſimplicity of heart, and
gleneſs of affection. Thoſe, whom he loves, he profeſſes to love with
s whole heart, and his whole ſoul; and in the ſame meaſure that he
ves, he expects to be belov'd. The belov'd Diſciple tells us of his
aſter, that *having lov'd his own which were in the world, he lov'd* John. 13. 1.
em unto the end: and if the love of Chriſt to us, who are ſo little
niable, had no limits; much more ought ours to him, who is always
vely, to be without reſerve, without partiality, and without end.

SER-

MVSEVM BRITANNICVM

SERMON XXXV.

The Uneaſineſs of Double-mindedneſs.

JAMES IV. 8.

The ſecond ſermon on this Text.

----- *Purifie your hearts, ye Double-minded.*

OF all the fooliſh and wretched perſons that are to be found amongſt the ſons of men, there are none, whom good nature and Chriſtian charity ſhould more diſpoſe us to pity and to reſcue, than ſuch unhappy ſouls, as take a great deal of labour and pains to arrive at heaven, and who yet after all, for want of taking a little more pains, and uſing a little more diligence, run great hazard of everlaſting perdition. Were they more uniform and conſtant, than they are, in doing every thing that might contribute to their pleaſure and advantage in this world; were all their expectations terminated on this ſide the grave; did they propoſe to themſelves no other good, but what this life affords; and did they take due care to procure as large a ſhare, as is poſſible, of all the good things that are to be enjoy'd here; tho' we could not but condemn them for making ſo wrong and injudicious a choice, and for preferring ſhort and tranſitory pleaſures to thoſe that are more durable, and which ſhall never fail; yet ſtill we might pronounce them happy in this reſpect, *that they* are not defeated in their hopes; that they ſucceed in their deſigns; that they reap the fruit of their labours; and that they are, tho', God knows, far from being truly happy, yet as happy as their own hearts do wiſh, and as they themſelves deſire to be.

BUT when men do, out of a principle of Religion, abſtain from ſeveral pleaſures, and forego ſeveral advantages, which, were it not for the fear of being call'd to account in another world, they would n abſtain from, or forego; when they give themſelves the trouble of performing many difficult and irkſom duties, which, were it not for th proſpect of a future reward, they would not burden themſelves with when they ſpend a great part of their time, and of their labour, of th ſubſtance, their ſtrength, and their ſpirits, in acts of piety and devo tio

on, of mortification and ſelf-denial, of charity and generoſity, which
n turn to no account to them, unleſs they ſhall be recompens'd for
em in the world to come; when men, I ſay, go thus far towards making
emſelves eternally happy, and yet, for want of going a little farther,
o finally miſcarry; when at the ſame time that they forbear ſome ſin-
l practices, which might hazard their ſalvation, they allow themſelves
others, which will as certainly end in their utter deſtruction; when,
r want of having one heart entirely devoted to God, for want of puri-
y of mind and ſimplicity of intention, they incur the ſame doom with
oſe, whoſe hearts are wholly eſtrang'd from God, who never walk'd
his ways, who never fear'd Him at all; their caſe is very ſad and la-
entable, and a very proper object of our Chriſtian compaſſion.

AND yet, it is to be fear'd, this is the caſe of the generality of Chriſtians;
r, without all peradventure, the number of thoſe who do nothing at all
wards ſaving their own ſouls is much leſs, than the number of ſuch, who
o ſomething, but do not enough. Few there are ſo abandon'd to vice, as
ever to turn their looks, or bend their courſe towards heaven; but ma-
y fall ſhort of it, becauſe they don't preſs forwards with alacrity and vi-
our: they make ſome faint efforts, but they don't exert their whole
rength; they go on for a ſhort time in the paths of virtue, but they too
uickly either ſtand ſtill, or retreat: they make ſhift for ſome while *to
ght a good fight*, but for want of *finiſhing their courſe*, and of *keeping
e faith* to the end, they loſe that *crown of righteouſneſs, which is laid
p for* thoſe who perſevere to the laſt. The Son *of Sirach* could not re-
ect upon the fooliſh conduct of ſuch unſteady inconſiſtent men, with-
ut being angry, as well as griev'd at it: *There be two things*, ſaith that Ecclus.26.28.
iſe man, *that grieve my heart, and the third maketh me angry*: *a man
war that ſuffereth poverty, and men of underſtanding that are not ſet
, and one that returneth from righteouſneſs unto ſin*; *the Lord pre-
areth ſuch an one for the ſword.* But as provoking as this conduct is,
r indignation againſt the thing muſt not carry us ſo far againſt the per-
ns, as that we ſhould not interpoſe between them and deſtruction; and
o all we can to ward off from them the thruſts of that ſword, which
e Lord hath prepar'd againſt them. Their caſe being ſo extremely pitia-
le, and the number of thoſe who are concern'd therein ſo great, we ſhall
eſerve to be excus'd, if we do again take it into our conſideration, and
ndeavour to repreſent it to them in ſuch a light, as to prevail with
em to take it into theirs. This we have done in ſome meaſure alrea-
y, by ſhewing the extreme folly of thoſe, who thus aim at different ends,
nd purſue different courſes, that this ſingleneſs of heart, which our Apoſtle
ere enjoyns, might recommend it ſelf to their choice, on account of the
iſdom it argues; and this we ſhall go on to do, by repreſenting to them
e uneaſineſs and perplexity, which ſuch divided affections and repug-
ant actions muſt needs involve them in; that this ſimplicity of inten-
ion may appear ſtill farther deſirable, in regard of the pleaſure that at-
ends it.

WE have obſerv'd it to be the character of a double-minded perſon,
hat he is always unfix'd and changeable. Now the deſire of change
founded upon the diſſatisfaction we find in that condition, from which
e change. If the unſteady perſon were at eaſe in his own mind; if in
ny of the ſeveral ways which he takes, he found that content, which
e hunts after; he would go on to purſue the ſame ways, in proſpect
f the continuance or encreaſe of the ſame ſatiſfaction: but he there-

fore alters his reſolutions, and tries other courſes, becauſe thoſe, which he had before tried, did not afford him ſuch a meaſure of happineſs, as he expected from them. Motion is generally in it ſelf uneaſy, and is therefore undergone, becauſe by it we hope ſome time to be at reſt. But when a perſon is conſtantly in motion; when he ſhifts from one thing to another; when he leaves what he had formerly purſu'd, and then again, after ſome ſhort interval of time, purſues afreſh what before he had left; we may as certainly conclude ſuch a perſon to be uneaſy, as we judge that one who ſhifts from ſide to ſide, and tries all poſtures, but continues long in none, is under the extremity of pain. When a mariner hath determin'd within himſelf what port to make to, and is ſecure that he is in the direct way, which will bring him to that port; whatever ill accidents he meets with in his paſſage, tho' in themſelves grievous, are in ſome meaſure made tolerable, by the proſpect he hath of arriving at the deſir'd haven at laſt: but when he is toſs'd by contrary winds from one point to the other; when, in the words of the Pſal. 107. 27. *Pſalmiſt, he reels to and fro, and ſtaggers like a drunken man, and is at his wits end,* becauſe he knows not which way to ſteer his courſe; then muſt his *ſoul* needs be *melted* within him *becauſe of trouble.*

Now this is the unpleaſant condition of a double-minded perſon: Epheſ. 4. 14. he is *toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind.* Sometimes the pleaſures of this world appear amiable in his eyes, and he purſues them with great eagerneſs of ſoul: but theſe having nothing in them, which will ſatisfie his deſires; theſe either flying from him whilſt he follows them, or vaniſhing away in the fruition; he hopes to find more ſolid contentment of mind in the practice of virtue and the duties of Religion: but having not a true reliſh for theſe more refin'd pleaſures, finding ſome hardſhips in his firſt entrance upon an holy life, and wanting reſolution of mind to overcome them by patience and perſeverance, he quickly relapſes into his former wicked courſes, and tries again the more beaten paths of vice: but ſtill he is as far remov'd, as ever he was, from the attainment of true happineſs, becauſe he doth not move towards it in a direct line, but, by going ſometimes forwards and ſometimes backwards, is at an equal diſtance from his journey's end, after all his weariſom travel and pains, as he was when he at firſt ſet out.

The ſpiritual or heavenly-minded perſon, who purſues the paths of virtue with an even and ſteady courſe, finds in himſelf a fund of joy, which is never to be exhauſted; a ſpring of comfort and delight, which never fails him. *The righteous is glad in the Lord and rejoyceth, and* Pſal. 16. 5, &c. *the upright in heart ſhouts for joy*: for *the Lord is the portion of his inheritance, and his cup. The lines are fallen unto him in pleaſant places; yea, he hath a goodly heritage. He ſets the Lord always before him; and becauſe God is at his right hand,* he knows *he cannot be mov'd. Therefore his heart is glad, and his glory rejoyceth, his fleſh alſo reſts in hope,* for he knows that God *will ſhew him the direct path of life, in whoſe preſence* he is ſure there *is fulneſs of joy, and at whoſe right hand there are pleaſures for evermore.*

On the other ſide, the ſenſual and carnal-minded perſon, who is uniform and conſiſtent with himſelf in a conſtant and uninterrupted courſe of ſin; who hath got the conqueſt over his conſcience, and is deaf to its loudeſt cries; who, finding the fetters of Religion too ſtrait and burdenſom, hath taken care to *break theſe bonds aſunder, and to caſt away theſe cords from him,* hath his ſhare of pleaſures, which he freely

enjoys,

joys, without abatement, without reſerve, and without controll. He
inks that *he was born at all adventure*, and therefore he is eaſily re- Wiſd. 2. 2, &c.
lv'd to live at all adventure too. The principles which he profeſſes are,
at *the breath in his noſtrils is as ſmoke, and a little ſpark in the mov-*
of his heart, which being extinguiſh'd, his body ſhall be turn'd into
hes, and his ſpirit ſhall vaniſh as the ſoft air; that *his name ſhall be*
rgotten in time, and that *no man ſhall have his works in remembrance*;
at *his life ſhall paſs away as the trace of a cloud, and ſhall be diſpers'd*
a miſt, that is driven away with the beams of the ſun; that *his*
ne is a very ſhadow that paſſeth away; and that *after his end there*
no returning: *for it is faſt ſealed, ſo that no man cometh again.* Theſe
the articles of his creed; and the concluſions which he draws from
eſe irreligious principles are very juſt and natural, and ſuch as have a
oſe connexion with them. *Come on therefore*, ſay theſe men, *let us enjoy* v. 6, &c.
good things that are preſent, and let us ſpeedily uſe the creatures, like
in youth: *let us fill our ſelves with coſtly wine and ointments, and let*
flower of the ſpring paſs by us: *let us crown our ſelves with roſe-buds,*
fore they are wither'd: *let none of us go without his part of volup-*
ouſneſs: *let us leave tokens of our joyfulneſs in every place*; *for this is*
r portion, and our lot is this.

THE double-minded perſon, who pretends to be ſometimes ſpiritual,
d who at other times is carnal; who ſhares his affections betwixt the
eator and the Creature; who ſometimes obeys the laws of God to com-
with the dictates of his conſcience, and at other times diſobeys God's
ws to gratifie his ſenſual appetite, may perhaps propoſe to himſelf a
uble ſhare of pleaſure; and all that happineſs which the ſpiritual and
rnal perſon do ſeparately divide between them, he may fondly hope
join together in one, and to enjoy at once. But whilſt he aims at too
ich, he is in danger to loſe all; whilſt he claims more happineſs than
mes to his ſhare, he forfeits what otherwiſe he might have fairly en-
'd; and, inſtead of uniting in one the different pleaſures of a ſenſual
d ſpiritual life, he will find by experience that he truly taſts neither.
r the pleaſures of ſin are imbitter'd by the remorſes of conſcience,
hoſe checks he is not able wholly to ſilence; and, on the other ſide,
at ſatisfaction of mind, which he ſhould reap from the conſciouſneſs
having done ſome things well, is impair'd by the ſenſe of guilt, which
ſes from his having done other things which he knows to be evil.

THERE are ſeveral forbidden pleaſures, which a profligate, diſſolute
orough-pac'd ſinner, who hath no ſenſe of ſhame, no fear of God, no
ugglings of conſcience to reſtrain him, doth without controll freely in-
lge himſelf in; and theſe, however unſuitable to the dignity of his
ture, however in themſelves vile, mean, and unbeſeeming a reaſon-
le creature, yet, thro' the viciouſneſs of his taſt, unus'd to more ra-
onal pleaſures, and by cuſtom and habit inur'd to theſe, make up a great
rt of that happineſs which he pitches upon as his lot and portion. But
e double-minded perſon who propoſes to himſelf different ends, and pur-
es different courſes, tho' he ſometimes tranſgreſſes the lines of duty,
res not go ſo great lengths in vice; he hath not ſo far got the maſtery
er his conſcience, but that there are ſeveral kinds and inſtances of ſin,
which he preſently ſtarts back and recoils: he is for keeping up an in-
reſt with two oppoſite parties, God and the world; and therefore is care-
l not to ſerve either, ſo far, as to make the breach with the other ut-
rly irreconcilable: and thus, for want of a perfect and uniform obe-

dience, he loſes thoſe pleaſures, which the Saints of God find in a virtuous and religious life; and at the ſame time, for want of being thoroughly wicked, he debars himſelf from ſeveral ſorts and degrees of pleaſure, which profligate ſinners take very frequent and very large draughts of.

AND as thro' the reſtraint of conſcience he dares not allow himſelf in ſeveral pleaſures, which notorious and profligate ſinners liberally take of; ſo in thoſe, which thro' the prevalence of his luſts he gives way to, he finds not all that reliſh which they do. For tho' he is ſo far wicked, as not to reſiſt a temptation when it is offer'd; yet he doth not ſo much as the other entertain himſelf with the proſpect of criminal pleaſure before he enjoys it; his ſoul is not ſo wholly ſwallow'd up with it, whilſt he enjoys it; and he doth not with ſo much contentment call it back, and dwell upon it in his memory, and act it over again in his imagination, after he has enjoy'd it. Whilſt the ſinful pleaſure is yet at a diſtance, it looks leſs charming in his ſight, becauſe of the ſin which accompanies it, and which his conſcience plainly tells him he ſhall be ſeverely puniſh'd for: when it is preſent, its ſweetneſs is much allay'd by the comparing it with thoſe greater pleaſures, at the price of which this ſhort one is purchas'd; and when it is once paſt, he dares not recall it to his memory, for fear of awakening the uneaſy thoughts of God's impending vengeance, and frighting himſelf with the dreadful proſpect of hell opening its mouth to ſwallow him.

THUS, whether we take a view of the pleaſures of this world, as future, preſent, or paſt; from whatever point we look upon them, and in whatever light we place them, they will be found to afford much leſs ſatisfaction to the half-Chriſtian, who is divided in his principles and in his practices, than they do to the profligate and declar'd libertine. And as the pleaſures which ſuch an one reaps from his ſins, which he frequently falls into, are much more feeble, than thoſe which wicked men enjoy, who go on in a conſtant and even courſe of ſinning; ſo, on the other ſide, thoſe delights which he finds in the practice of ſuch religious duties, as he ſometimes performs, are much more inſipid than thoſe, which the ſervants of God feel, whilſt, as far as human infirmity permits, they go on in a conſtant and uniform courſe of obedience. For thoſe acts of virtue which the perfect Chriſtian performs with great eaſe, and for that reaſon with great pleaſure, the partial half-Chriſtian cannot exerciſe without difficulty, nor conſequently without pain. What hardſhips all men find in their firſt entrance upon the practice of religious duties, the ſame do fickle and unſteady perſons always find in the diſcharge of them. For whilſt, inſtead of advancing conſtantly forwards in the paths of *holineſs*, they do ſometimes go backwards, they muſt neceſſarily begin again, and conſequently encounter afreſh all thoſe difficulties, which were to be grappled with in the firſt beginnings of a religious life.

TO one, who goes on conſtantly in the ſtrait paths of an holy life, thoſe ways, which at firſt were difficult to be found or paſs'd, by being daily trodden become more familiar and more paſſable. Every ſtep which he takes renders the next eaſier; his ſtrength encreaſes gradually with the proficiency he makes, and the farther he hath gone, the farther he finds himſelf ſtill able to go without fainting or wearineſs. But now it is quite otherwiſe with one who wavers in the practice of his duty: for tho' he makes ſome ſteps forwards in the paths of virtue, yet he often ſtumbles and falls; and that vigour which ſhould be employ'd in

advancing farther, is wholly ſpent in recovering his ground. He
ath done ſome things in order to conquer his ſinful habits, but he hath
ot gone thro' with that uſeful work; but, by ſwerving often from his
bedience, hath ſuffer'd them to regain their ſtrength; ſo that what
long cuſtom and habitual practice might have been render'd eaſie
d familiar to him, that, thro' the power of different cuſtoms and con-
ary habits, is render'd difficult and irkſom. For in order to gain
habit of doing things with eaſe and pleaſure, it is not only neceſſary
at there ſhould be a frequent repetition of the ſame acts; but they
uſt alſo be repeated without intermiſſion, at leaſt without the inter-
ſition of ſuch acts as are repugnant to them.

But he who purſues different ends, and takes different courſes, by
frequent lapſes into ſin takes pains to deſtroy what before he had
ilt; thoſe habits of virtue, which ſhould have been ſtrengthen'd by
nſtant and uninterrupted acts of holineſs, are not only by intermiſſion
the like good actions much weakned, but by the commiſſion of ſin-
and forbidden actions quite deſtroy'd: ſo that whenever, upon the
ange of his humour, he is willing to perform his duty again, he doth
with as much pain and difficulty, as if he had never attempted it
fore. It is true there is no one who hath ſo far gain'd the dominion
er his luſts, but that, after the utmoſt progreſs he hath made in Re-
ion, he will find ſome reluctancies to the obedience of the ſeverer
ws of the Goſpel: for whilſt we are made up of fleſh and blood; whilſt
ere is in us that root of bitterneſs, which we deriv'd from our firſt
rents; and which we muſt never expect entirely to extirpate, as long
we carry about us theſe ſinful bodies; there will be ſome inclinations
that which is evil, ſome oppoſitions between the old and new man,
me ſtrugglings between the fleſh and the ſpirit: but ſtill there is a
eat deal of difference betwixt this ſtate of ſtrife and contention, which
beſt of Chriſtians labour under, and that war which is conſtantly
g'd within the breaſt of a double-minded ſinner, who willingly ſerves
o different maſters, and knowingly goes two different ways. For
at is the good Chriſtian's infelicity and complaint, that is ſuch an
e's free choice and option; that war which the one would quell, the
her foments.

The good Chriſtian having liſted himſelf a ſoldier under Chriſt's ban-
r, and declar'd war againſt his own and God's enemies, carries on this
r with reſolution and vigour; he goes on to reſiſt them with un-
unted courage and bravery; he is always upon his guard to defend
mſelf againſt the open aſſaults and treacherous deſigns of his ſworn
d implacable enemies: he goes on conquering to conquer, and when
his own courage and God's aſſiſtance he hath gain'd any advantage,
is ſure to follow his blow, and to purſue the victory he hath got;
d if ever, thro' inadvertency, or ſurpriſe, or the violence of an over-
aring power, he is worſted, he makes haſt to recollect his ſtrength, and
renew the combat with greater vigour and alacrity; he is neither
unted nor made leſs active by his fall, but returns more eager and
ore reſolute to the fight; the indignation he conceives againſt him-
lf for having been once overcome, raiſes his ſpirits to an higher pitch;
e ſhame he feels from the ſenſe of his late defeat ſtirs up in him new
grees of courage; and diſdain kindles in his breaſt ſuch a generous
eat, as is not to be extinguiſh'd 'till he is fully aveng'd of his ſpiritual
emy.

But now the divided, inconſiſtent, ſelf-repugnant actor governs himſelf by quite different meaſures: as he ſometimes reſiſts, ſo at other times he willingly gives way to, the enemy; he ſo fights as one that is wholly indifferent, whether he conquers or is ſubdu'd: if he gains any advantage, he is ſo far from purſuing it, that he takes no care to keep it; and if he is once repuls'd, he tamely yields himſelf up a ſlave to the will of the conqueror: being once overpower'd by the prevalence of his luſts, he pays as quiet an obedience to their uſurp'd authority, as ever he did to the commands of his rightful Lord and Maſter: ſo that when afterwards he would return to his duty, he finds himſelf enſlav'd by a force, which might at firſt have been with great eaſe reſiſted by him, but being once ſubmitted to, is not without great pains and difficulty to be ſhaken off. What I aim at by this metaphor is plainly this: tho' there be in all Chriſtians ſome ſtrugglings betwixt the fleſh and the ſpirit, and conſequently ſome uneaſineſs in reſiſting temptations, and living up to the ſtrict rules of the Goſpel; yet the difficulties which good men, who thro' the whole tenor of their lives go on regularly in a virtuous courſe, find in the diſcharge of their duty, is not to be compar'd with that pain and reluctance, which thoſe unhappy, unſteady perſons find in doing well at ſome times and in ſome inſtances, who have accuſtom'd themſelves at other times and in other inſtances to the doing ill.

Now if the double-minded perſon, who would unite the oppoſite intereſts of this world and the next in one, doth inſtead of that ſo manage, as to loſe both; if thoſe ſenſual pleaſures which he enjoys from ſin, are both in their extent fewer, and in their degree leſs intenſe, than ſuch as carnal perſons enjoy; and if thoſe rational pleaſures, which he reaps from the exerciſe of virtue and the duties of Religion, are far beneath thoſe joys which the ſpiritual perſon is refreſh'd with; and if he hath too much Religion for this world, and too little for the next; if his conſcience is ſo nice as to make him ſtart at many things, which would render him happy here, and on the other ſide is ſo tractable as to ſuffer him to do ſeveral things, which will make him eternally miſerable hereafter; if his thoughts are always diſtracted between two contrary objects, which with equal force draw him two ſeveral ways; if he is at a perpetual war with himſelf; if in his thoughts there be tumult and diſquiet; if in his faculties there be diſorder and confuſion; if in his deſigns there is uncertainty and contrariety; if in his actions there is pain and difficulty; if in his expectations there is diffidence and diſtruſt; if in his enjoyments there is diſcontent and diſſatisfaction; nothing farther needs to be added to ſhew the uneaſineſs of ſuch an unſteady conduct, or to recommend to you purity of heart and ſimplicity of intention, as highly deſirable in regard of that pleaſure and contentment of mind, which always attends it.

SER-

SERMON XXXVI.

The Sinfulneſs of Double-mindedneſs.

JAMES IV. 8.

----- *Purifie your hearts, ye Double-minded.*

The third ſermon on this Text.

BY double-minded perſons you have been taught to underſtand ſuch men, who *are unſtable in all their ways*; whoſe thoughts and purpoſes are various and inconſiſtent; who aim at deſigns which interfere with one another; who deſire to be happy in the next world, but deſire in the mean time to joy the ſinful pleaſures of this; who ſhare their *affections* equally bewixt *things above, and things on the earth*; who go two ways, ſerve o maſters, and are therefore with great elegance ſtil'd by the Apoſtle υχοι *double-minded*, becauſe their deſigns and actions are as incongruous d unſuitable, as if they had more than one mind; as if there were literally in them an heart and an heart, which is the *Hebrew* expreſſion r inſincerity; and as if their thoughts and operations proceeded from o quite oppoſite and repugnant ſouls.

PURITY of heart is that qualification, which theſe men want; that, hich becauſe they are deſtitute of, they deſerve the character of doue-minded; and that, which if they endeavour'd after and attain'd, they ould be no longer double-minded. By knowing therefore the ill quaty which double-minded perſons are accus'd of, we at the ſame time now the good quality which the Apoſtle recommends to them: this tter muſt be the reverſe of the former; whatever can be affirm'd of e double-minded perſon, muſt be denied of the pure in heart; for the aracter of the one is directly oppoſite to the character of the other: that by ſuch who have purified their hearts, we muſt underſtand thoſe, ho are ſtable in all their ways; whoſe thoughts and purpoſes are unirm and conſiſtent; who give up themſelves entirely to the ſervice of od, and the purſuit of their eternal happineſs, without propoſing to emſelves any end which may interfere with this; who go one way, rve one maſter, form to themſelves one ſingle deſign; who having fix'd in their minds what ſhall be their chief end, purſue it ſteadily, conſtantly, and uniformly; in ſhort, who order all their actions ſo, as that they have all their proper tendency to this one end; and, by acting thus congruouſly and conſiſtently with themſelves, ſhew that all their thoughts and operations reſult from one and the ſame principle, and that they have but one mind or ſoul.

NOW, in order to preſs upon you an earneſt endeavour after this purity of heart, I propos'd to ſhew,

I. THE folly of purſuing oppoſite ends, that this ſingleneſs of heart might recommend it ſelf to your choice, on account of the wiſdom it argues.

II. THE uneaſineſs of purſuing oppoſite ends, that this ſimplicity of intention might appear to you ſtill farther deſirable, in regard of the pleaſure that attends it.

III. THE ſinfulneſs of aiming at ſuch oppoſite ends, that this purity of heart might recommend it ſelf to your practice, in reſpect of its abſolute and indiſpenſable neceſſity to your eternal ſalvation.

THE folly and uneaſineſs of aiming at oppoſite ends; the wiſdom and pleaſure of purſuing one ſingle end, I have already ſhew'd. It remains now, in the

Third AND laſt place, that what I before prov'd to be fooliſh, and therefore ridiculous for a man of ſenſe to aim at; uneaſy, and therefore improper for a man, who hath any regard to the pleaſure of life, to diſturb himſelf with, I do alſo prove ſinful, and therefore not to be ventur'd on by any Chriſtian, who hath a regard to the ſalvation of his ſoul.

WERE it only an imprudent thing to purſue two oppoſite ends, perſons of a mean and low ſpirit might be eaſy enough under the imputation of folly; were the proſecution of ſuch oppoſite ends attended only with ſome difficulties, uneaſineſſes, and inconveniences, theſe perchance might in ſome meaſure be endur'd; but if theſe oppoſite ends cannot be proſecuted without ſin, nor conſequently without danger of eternal puniſhment, then this ſingleneſs of heart is not only commendable, as a ſign of prudence; not only eligible, as attended with pleaſure; but is abſolutely indiſpenſable, as one of the conditions of our everlaſting ſalvation. And this is the chief motive which miniſters of the Goſpel ought to propoſe, when they would enforce upon their hearers the endeavour after any Chriſtian grace, or the performance of any Chriſtian duty. To ſhew that an action is reaſonable, and therefore fit for a wiſe man to perform, is the proper office of one who ſets up for a teacher of human wiſdom or morality: to ſhew that it is pleaſant, and therefore will afford great ſatisfaction of mind to the doer of it, is an argument proper for a poet, or an orator; but to ſhew that it is commanded, and neceſſary to ſalvation, is the peculiar province of the miniſters of God's Word. And as this is an argument which it is more proper for us to uſe, ſo it lies more level to all capacities: what actions are prudent or fooliſh, none but perſons of ſome prudence can rightly diſcern; what are pleaſant or unpleaſant muſt be chiefly learn'd from experience; but what are commanded or forbidden, made neceſſary to ſalvation, or prohibited under the penalty of damnation, every one is capable of knowing, who can read and underſtand the Word of God, or who can hear

and apprehend it, when it is read and explain'd unto him. And as
s kind of argument is more proper for us to uſe, and more eaſy for
ſorts of hearers to apprehend; ſo alſo is it more forcible and moving.
y excellence of mind, any good and virtuous action may be ſet off
th very lively colours, and inviting features, by an eloquent ſpeaker;
may be preſs'd by very ſtrong reaſons, and from convincing topicks,
a moral philoſopher; but it is never ſo ſtrongly enforc'd as by a
eacher of the Goſpel, who ſhews that it is commanded by an Al-
ighty Law-giver, and will be rewarded with eternal happineſs. I may
ſuch an action, or aim at ſuch a qualification, becauſe it is decent
l commendable; I had better do it, becauſe it is pleaſant and con-
nient; but I muſt do it, becauſe my eternal ſalvation depends upon
I may have no great notions of what is decent and graceful; I may
at liberty to forego a pleaſure or an advantage; but I cannot be in-
ferent, whether I will be eternally happy or miſerable.

WHAT hath been already ſaid by me concerning the folly of aiming
oppoſite ends, will recommend ſingleneſs of heart to all men of
udence or diſcretion; what hath been ſaid concerning the uneaſineſs
aiming at oppoſite ends, will make ſimplicity of intention deſirable
all, who value their preſent eaſe and ſatisfaction; but what remains
ther to be ſaid concerning the ſinfulneſs of aiming at oppoſite ends,
l both add new ſtrength to the former arguments with thoſe, who
e been at all wrought on by them, and will alſo be of weight with
ſe, whom the former motives may have laid no hold of, as reaching
all men, who have any regard to their eternal ſalvation.

NOW the ſinfulneſs of propoſing to our ſelves ſuch oppoſite ends, as
ſalvation of our ſouls, and the gratification of our luſts; the obliqui-
of ſharing our affections equally between heaven and earth; the un-
fulneſs of dividing our obedience betwixt ſuch oppoſite maſters, as
d and Mammon, will appear from the inconſiſtency of ſuch double
entions, ſuch divided affections, ſuch mixt obedience, with that ſin-
e love of God, which the Goſpel hath plainly made the neceſſary con-
ion of our ſalvation.

AND *firſt* the ſinfulneſs of ſuch double intentions is evident from its
ntrariety to that love of God, which the Goſpel expreſly requires.

WHEN our Saviour was ask'd with an evil intention by a lawyer,
hich was the great commandment of the law, he, who was the eternal Matt. 22. 35.
w-giver, and therefore muſt know on which of his own laws he him-
f laid the greateſt ſtreſs, and which therefore ought with men to be
the greateſt weight, *ſaid unto him*, and by him to all who ſhould ever
ke the ſame enquiry with better intentions, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord*
y God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind;
is, he tells us, *is the firſt and great commandment*; the firſt in order,
d in dignity; the firſt to be laid down, as the foundation of all other pre-
pts; and the firſt and chief to be practis'd, as that without which the
rformance of all other duties will be unacceptable. This was the firſt
mmandment of the Law, and this is ſtill the firſt commandment of
e Goſpel: on this, with the other concerning the love of our neigh-
our, *hang all the Law and the Prophets*; and on theſe two alſo depend
l the Goſpel and the Apoſtles. But on this firſt depends that other con-
rning the love of our brethren; ſo that, in the laſt reſort, on this one
angs all the Law and the Goſpel. Now whatever be the full import of
his fundamental precept; whether it is to be underſtood in the moſt ri-

gorous ſenſe of which the words are capable; or whether it admits of a more favourable conſtruction; whether we keep ſtrictly to the very letter of it, and make God the ſole object of our love, excluſively of all other beings; or whether we conſtrue it with ſome latitude, and make God no more than the chief object of our love, in preference to all other beings; either of theſe expoſitions of the precept ſufficiently proves the iniquity of that double-mindedneſs, which we are now concern'd to expoſe as ſinful; and the neceſſity of that purity of heart, which we are now engag'd to prove a thing abſolutely requiſite to ſalvation. Some perſons of eminent piety and great zeal for the honour of God, whoſe affections and whoſe thoughts are rais'd much above the common level, have thought it clear from the letter of this commandment, that God ought not only to be the principal, but the ſole object of our love; that we are by this firſt and greateſt law requir'd to love God ſo entirely, as that we muſt love nothing elſe with a love of deſire, tho' it ſhould be only with ſubordination to him; that no one can be ſaid, with any tolerable ſenſe, *to love God with all his heart, and all his ſoul,* who only loves him above all other things, at the ſame time allowing other things a ſhare, tho' a much inferior and much ſmaller ſhare, in his love; that therefore, if we would truly come up to the ſenſe of this commandment, we are bound to withdraw every degree of love or deſire from the creature: For that we may as well worſhip the creatures, as love them; that to love the creature, tho' but relatively to God, is to give that love to the creature, which is proper to God; that ſuch relative love of God is like the relative worſhip of the *Papiſts*, and as much idolatry as that; in ſhort, that he who deſires or loves any thing beſides God, whatever he pretends, or however he deceives himſelf, doth not truly love God.

Now if theſe doctrines are at the bottom as ſolid, as they ſeem pious; if they are as conſiſtent with the analogy of other Scriptures, as they are with the letter of this precept; if they give us the ſenſe intended by the Law-giver in this firſt and great commandment, and not barely the ſenſe, of which, according to grammatical conſtruction, the words of the law are capable; then the ſinfulneſs of dividing our affections equally betwixt the Creator and the Creature is plainly prov'd; becauſe if God alone is to be belov'd; if the leaſt degree of love is to be withdrawn from every other object, then muſt an equal deſire of worldly and eternal happineſs, and the ſeeking of this world's goods as earneſtly as *the kingdom of God, and its righteouſneſs*, be much more inconſiſtent with the true love of God, and much more ſtrictly prohibited in this firſt and great commandment. But it muſt be own'd that moſt interpreters, as well ancient as modern, have thought that this commandment is not to be ſtrain'd to ſo high a pitch, as to forbid all degrees of love to the creature, but only ſuch degrees of affection, as make them come in competition with the Creator: they therefore underſtand by this precept, not that God alone is to be belov'd by us, but that he is to be belov'd above all things; that nothing is to be belov'd comparatively with him; nothing but by way of relation and ſubordination to him: that we then *love God with all our heart, with all our ſoul, and with all our mind,* when we prize nothing ſo much as God in our underſtanding; when we cleave to nothing ſo much as to him in our wills; when we deſire nothing ſo fervently as him in our affections; when in our actions we purſue nothing but in relation to his glory, and in ſubordination to his will declar'd unto us by his holy laws.

Now

Now this interpretation, if it doth not quite come up to the letter of the commandment, yet certainly it raiſes the duty to as great an height, as is perhaps poſſible for human nature to reach, or as it is requir'd of a good Chriſtian to come up to. For temporal bleſſings are promis'd to good men as a reward of their obedience, and may therefore be an object of their deſire: we are commanded to pray for them, and therefore may lawfully have ſome degree of affection for what we aſk: we are bid to look upon them as the gift of God, and therefore muſt acknowledge them to be in ſome meaſure good, ſince they are the gracious effects of divine goodneſs: we are to thank God for beſtowing them upon us, which we ſhall be leſs diſpos'd to do, if we look upon them as no ways amiable, no ways deſirable, no ways contributing to our happineſs: we are requir'd to uſe induſtry in the procurement of theſe things, which induſtry would be very ill employ'd, if theſe temporal enjoyments had nothing in them which might engage our affections: in ſhort, the deſire of theſe things is natural, and therefore cannot be ſinful; it is irreſiſtible, and therefore is not to be conquer'd by us; it is implanted by God in the frame and conſtitution of our beings, and therefore cannot be thought to be forbidden by the ſame God in the body of his laws.

If we examine things cloſely, we ſhall, I believe, find, that the diſpute betwixt thoſe who make God the ſole, and thoſe who make him the principal object of our love; thoſe who deny any thing beſides God to be good and deſirable, and thoſe who allow other things alſo to be good and amiable, differs rather in expreſſion, than in notion; or at leaſt, that the difference between them is merely in ſpeculation, and can have no influence at all upon our Chriſtian practice. For this controverſy in Divinity is nothing elſe but the renewal of an old controverted point in Philoſophy. Some philoſophers of old conſidering that man was made up of body and ſoul, made the happineſs of man to conſiſt in the perfections of both: they were at the ſame time aware of the preeminence of the ſoul above the body; and therefore taught, that much more care was to be taken of the former, than of the latter. Good health, freedom from pain, and a perfect uſe of their ſenſes they reckon'd to be good for their bodies, and to be for their own ſakes truly deſirable: honour, riches, eſteem, friends, and other outward advantages, they look'd upon to be in their way alſo good, and, where they could be got and kept without injuring their virtue, to be deſir'd. Theſe goods of the body and fortune, they did not think equal with the goods of the mind, and therefore taught, that they were not ſo eagerly to be aim'd at, ſo much to be belov'd, ſo induſtriouſly to be courted, as thoſe greater goods: if indeed both could be had together, they thought both to be worthy of their wiſhes, and endeavours; but if the goods of the mind were not to be purchas'd but by the loſs of their bodily or worldly goods, they thought theſe were willingly to be quitted for the eaſier attainment of the other; for that tho' they were in themſelves good and deſirable, yet in compariſon to virtue, which was the greateſt good, they were trivial and contemptible.

Upon theſe foundations the virtue of one ſect of philoſophers was built, and theſe were thought ſufficient to bear that ſuperſtructure, which was laid upon them. But there aroſe another ſet of men, who profeſſing a greater veneration for virtue, and being deſirous to eſtabliſh it, as they pretended, upon ſtill firmer principles, would not own that the body was truly and properly any part of the man; nor, conſequently, that any of thoſe things, which are uſeful to our bodies only, made any part at all of human happineſs. The goods of the mind they look'd upon to be, not barely the principal, but indeed the only ingredients of our felicity: what the others call'd the goods of the body, or the goods of fortune, they denied to be in any ſenſe good, or at all deſirable; but then what the others call'd good, they call'd *præpoſita*, or preferable; what they would not allow to be worthy of our deſire, they own'd to be worthy our having; and, at the ſame time, that they affirm'd virtue alone to be ſufficient to make a man's life ſo happy, as that it could not poſſibly be happier, yet they thought, if thoſe bodily advantages, which they denied to be good, were abſent, ſomething was ſtill wanting to him who had them not, which 'twere better for him to have: ſo that thoſe who denied health, food, and raiment to be good, did purſue them as earneſtly as thoſe who own'd them to be ſuch; and thoſe who look'd upon pain, ſickneſs, and poverty to be no evils, were as uneaſy under them, and as careful to decline them, as others who own'd them to be, what they could not but feel them to be, really evil.

And it is exactly the ſame thing in the controverſy concerning God's being the ſole, or the chief object of our love: thoſe who affirm him alone to be amiable, and other things to be not at all deſirable, tho' they ſpeak bigger than others do, yet, when they come to act, muſt be content to live by the ſame rules, as thoſe who make God, not the only, but the principal object of our love, and who allow other things *to be*, in an inferior degree, worthy of our affection. For whilſt the former allow that the creatures, tho' they may not be lov'd as our good, yet may be ſought for and us'd for our good; whilſt they grant, that tho' we ought to love God alone, that is, we ought to unite our ſelves to him alone, as our true good, or the real cauſe of our happineſs, yet we may will the uſe of other things, as of meat and drink, when we are hungry or thirſty, as being tho' not the cauſes, yet the occaſions of our happineſs; the difference between theſe Divines is only in expreſſion, and can have no influence upon our practice; there being as much danger, that thoſe men ſhould be immoderate in their purſuit of ſenſible goods, who own them to be the occaſions, as thoſe who own them to be the cauſes of pleaſure; and no more danger, that thoſe men ſhould greedily ſeek after the things of this world, who own them to be good, than thoſe who own them to be uſeful, as ſerving for our accommodation and conveniency.

I have perhaps engag'd farther in this diſpute, than may ſeem proper in a popular auditory; I was led into it by what was neceſſary to *be ſaid* concerning the great duty of loving God: our knowledge of the *true* meaſures of this duty depends upon our rightly underſtanding the genuine ſenſe of this great commandment: the ſenſe of this commandment ſeems not to be agreed upon by interpreters: whilſt we know not the full import of it, we cannot ſatisfie our ſelves whether we obey it as we ought, or not: it will be hard for the generality of Chriſtians to underſtand it aright, whilſt the moſt learned Divines ſeem divided in their ſentiments about it: it may therefore tend to the ſatisfaction of common Chriſtians to be inform'd, that the interpretations of this great law are not ſo different as at firſt ſight they may ſeem; that the rule of our Chriſtian practice will be the ſame, whichſoever expoſition we admit.

Scru-

SCRUPULOUS perſons need not fear that they tranſgreſs this law of
ng God with all their ſouls, and with all their hearts, when by law-
and unforbidden means they take care to provide ſuch things as are
eſſary for the ſupport of their bodies; and, on the other ſide, world-
perſons muſt not think that they *love God with all their ſouls,* and
ar as by this precept they are oblig'd to do, whilſt they are more
eful to provide for the deſires of their fleſh, than for the neceſſities of
r ſouls; or whilſt they are ſo much as equally intent upon procuring
es, honour, pleaſures, or any other temporal good things, as they
upon attaining that *incorruptible crown, which is laid up for all*
e, who are appointed heirs of everlaſting ſalvation. The beſt and
ſt teſt of our love of God is the keeping of his commandments; the
e intenſe therefore our love to him is, the more diligent ſhall we
o expreſs it by the integrity of our obedience. Whilſt we make
our chief aim, and moſt earneſt endeavour, it is an evident ſign
this love of God is predominant in our hearts: but if we are fickle
changeable in our ways; if at ſome times, and in ſome inſtances we
the commandments of God, and at other times, and in other in-
ces we violate his laws, it is plain that our obedience, even in thoſe
s where it is paid, doth not flow from the true principle, is not the
uine reſult of our love of God. For the ſame love which will diſ-
us to obey ſome laws, will incline us to obey all, God being equal-
iſpleas'd with our offending in any: the ſame love which prompts
o keep God's commandments at one time, will prevail with us to
the ſame commandments at all times, diſobedience being at all
s equally diſpleaſing to that God, who is always the ſame, always
hangeable. A man may love God ſo far, as to forego a ſmall tem-
l advantage, or to deny himſelf a ſmall ſenſual pleaſure, whoſe vir-
at the ſame time is not proof againſt the offer of a greater gain, or
e promiſing pleaſure: his love of God may be able to bear him up
nſt ſome temptations, and yet it may be too feeble to withſtand others:
his love to God is ſtinted and limited, it is capable of ſuch a deter-
'd degree of height, but cannot be rais'd to the utmoſt pitch, which
ught to riſe up to, to make it acceptable. There are ſome things
ch he loves leſs than God, and therefore the propoſal of theſe doth
make him ſwerve from his obedience: other things there are which
loves equally with God, and when theſe are propos'd, he wavers to
fro, and is indifferent which way he determines himſelf, whether to
dience or to diſobedience: but there are other things which he loves
re than God, and when theſe are propos'd as allurements to ſin, he
dily cloſes with them, as being deſtitute of that perfect love of God,
ich alone can make men ſteady and uniform in their obedience, be-
ſe that alone is proof againſt all temptations. If this love of God be
nly rooted in our hearts; if it be not feign'd and diſſembled, but in-
uous and ſincere; if it be not weak and remiſs, but ſtrong and fer-
nt; if it be not wavering and unconſtant, but permanent and ſteady;
re can be no motive ſtrong enough to miſlead us from our duty, be-
ſe there can never be offer'd any temptation, which will have ſo
ch force to withdraw us from it, as the love of God hath to oblige
to it. Hence is it, that the Apoſtle St. *Paul,* when he would ex-
eſs the undaunted courage of the firſt Chriſtians, and their ſteady re-
lution not to be deterr'd from their obedience to the Goſpel by all
e evils which the powers of the world could threaten or inflict, grounds

the unlikelihood of their being ſeduc'd from their obedience on the i probability there was, that they ſhould be ſeparated from the love Rom. 8. 35, 37, 38, 39. God and Chriſt: *Who ſhall ſeparate us*, ſaith he, *from the love of Chriſ ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedne or peril, or ſword? Nay in all theſe things we are more than conquero thro' him that loved us. For I am perſwaded, that neither death, life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, things to come, nor height, not depth, nor any other creature, ſhall able to ſeparate us from the love of God which is in Chriſt Jeſus Lord.*

NOW if the ſteadineſs of our obedience depends upon the ſincerity our love of God; if nothing can ſeduce them from their duty, who hearts are truly poſſeſt with an ardent love of God; then will it follo on the other ſide, that thoſe whoſe obedience is partial and interrupted who practiſe ſome Chriſtian duties to comply with the dictates of th conſcience, and allow themſelves in ſome groſs ſins to gratifie their ſe ſual appetites; who advance ſome ſteps in the paths of virtue, and af ter that depart back into ſinful courſes, are deſtitute of that ſuperlative love of God, which is the very baſis of all Religion, and the firſt and chief condition of our eternal ſalvation. For we muſt not think, tha this love of God above all things is a point of perfection, to which ſome more exalted Chriſtians arrive, but which others may fall ſhort of, with out hazarding the eternal welfare of their ſouls; ſince it is not given u by way of counſel, which it is expedient for us to follow, but by wa of precept, which it is neceſſary for us to obey; and the penalty threatne to the tranſgreſſion of this law, is not the forfeiture of ſome highe degrees of glory, to which, by the obſervance of it, we might have ar riv'd, but utter excluſion from immortal bliſs, to which, by the neglect of it, we render our ſelves juſtly obnoxious.

OUR Saviour hath told us, that, *if any one come to him, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and ſiſters, yea and his own life alſo, he cannot be his diſciple.* Luke 14.26. And St. *Matthew* relating the ſame diſcourſe of our Saviour, expreſſes c. 10. 37. the ſame aphoriſm in theſe equivalent terms: *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me, and he that loveth ſon and daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.* Chriſt doth not here make a perfect enumeration of all the objects which we ought for his ſake to hate, or, which is all one, which we ought to love leſs than we love him; but he reckons up ſuch only, as it is moſt reaſonable, and moſt natural, and moſt uſual for us to love; and, by peremptorily requiring us to love him more than theſe, doth much more exact of us, that we ſhould prefer him to all other objects, which being much leſs amiable than theſe, ought much leſs to come in competition with that love of Chriſt, which admits not even theſe to be belov'd in compariſon of him. And it is plain, that Chriſt doth not propoſe this duty as barely equitable, but as abſolutely neceſſary; ſince he ſaith, in expreſs words, that if we do not fulfil it, we cannot be worthy of him, we cannot be his diſciples; which are two expreſſions that come to the ſame thing, and which intimate to us, that if we do not obey this precept, we can have no part in his grace; we are not of the number of his diſciples; we are not members of Chriſt, nor conſequently ſhall be inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

Go

God in Scripture frequently ſtiles himſelf a jealous God: now his jea-
ſie is as much provok'd by our admitting other beings to be rivals
that eminent degree of love, which is due to him only, as it is by
r giving to other beings that worſhip, which he challenges to be his own
culiar. God's love to his people, and Chriſt's love to his Church, are
h in the Old and New Teſtament compar'd to the love of a husband
his wife: the reciprocal duty which God's people owe to him, and
ich the Church of Chriſt is requir'd to pay to Chriſt its head, is com-
'd to that conjugal love and fidelity, which is due from the wife to
husband: and the ſin of loving any thing equally with God, anſwer-
, according to the ſame metaphor, to the wive's admitting any part-
in that love which ſhe owes to her husband, is every where com-
'd to fornication and adultery. In the words of my text, what we
our language render *purifie your hearts*, is, according to the origi-
, make your hearts chaſt; and thoſe who want this purity of heart,
in this very chapter, v. 4. call'd *adulterers and adultereſſes*, as having
t affection for the world, which is due only to God, to whom they
e the ſame inviolable fidelity, as a wife doth to her husband. In al-
ion to the ſame myſtical relation between God and his people, St. *Paul*
s the *Corinthians*, that *he was jealous over them with a godly jea-*
ſie, for he had eſpous'd them to one husband, that he might pre-
t them as a chaſt virgin to Chriſt. 2 *Cor.* 11. 2. Now as conjugal
ſtity is not an extraordinary accompliſhment which becomes ſome
ves, but the neceſſary duty of all; ſo is this ſpiritual chaſtity not on-
a commendable excellence, which ſome more eminent Chriſtians may
ain, but an indiſpenſable duty which all Chriſtians muſt perform: as
ltery is utterly inconſiſtent with that conjugal love, which perſons
rried bind upon their conſciences by holy vows; ſo is this ſpiritual
ltery, or loving any other beings equally with God, utterly incon-
ent with that relation in which Chriſtians ſtand to Chriſt. As well
erefore may ſhe pretend to be a chaſt and faithful wife, who bears
t conjugal affection to others, which belongs only to her husband, as
t man can pretend to be a good Chriſtian, who, by a partial obedience
d frequent yielding to temptations, ſhews that he loves other things
ually with God, and pays that ſupereminent degree of love to the
ings of the world, which is due to God alone. If we love God as
r ſovereign good, and ſo we muſt love him, if we love him as we
ght, we ſhall deſire to enjoy God as our greateſt happineſs; and if
is deſire of ours be ſincere, we ſhall on the one ſide do every thing
hich is neceſſary to accompliſh our deſire, and on the other ſide, we
all do nothing that will lay invincible obſtacles to our attaining it.
ow it is certain, that there is nothing which is more neceſſary to our
joyment of God, than the conſtant obſervation of his laws; nothing
hich will more ſurely hinder our enjoyment of him than ſin: by con-
quence, if we heartily deſire ever to enjoy him, we ſhall apply our ſelves
rongly to do every thing which God commands, and ſhall avoid care-
lly every thing which he forbids; that is, in other words, we ſhall
y him, not a temporary and partial, but a conſtant and univerſal obe-
ience. Nothing can hinder us from obſerving God's laws, nothing can
etray us to ſin, but the deſire of ſome ſenſible goods and pleaſures,
hich are annex'd to the commiſſion of ſin: when we chuſe rather to
orfeit theſe pleaſures than to commit any known ſin, it is an evident
gn, that we love God more than theſe forbidden pleaſures; but when,

on the contrary, to gain any of theſe temporal goods, or to purchaſe any of theſe ſenſible pleaſures, we venture to offend God, we plainly prefer theſe things to God, and ſhew that whatever we profeſs in our words, yet truly in our hearts we love them more than we love him. Some perſons there are, who prefer every thing to God, there being no temptation ſo ſmall, no advantage ſo trivial, no pleaſure ſo inconſiderable, which is not ſufficient to induce them to diſobey God's laws: this is the character of the ſenſual and profane; and it muſt be confeſs'd that thoſe, againſt whom we are now directing our diſcourſe, are not ſunk to this degree of impiety. Others there are who on the contrary prefer God to every thing; there being no temptation ſo great, no advantage ſo promiſing, no pleaſure ſo charming, as to prevail upon them to offend God by tranſgreſſing his laws: this is the character of the ſpiritual-minded, and the Saints of God; and is an height of piety to which the double-minded take no care to arrive. Theſe continue in a middle ſtate between the other two; they prefer God to ſeveral things, and poſtpone him to ſeveral others: there are ſome ſins, which no conſideration will prevail on them to commit; and there are ſome temptations, which are not of weight enough to incline them to the commiſſion of any one known ſin: but there are other ſins, which the weakeſt motives will determine them to; and there are many more, which tho' they cannot be wrought upon to be guilty of by every ſlight temptation, yet they are not able to withſtand when the temptation is ſtronger. Now heaven is promis'd to the ſpiritual-minded, hell is threatned to the carnal-minded; the double-minded are in a middle ſtate between theſe, and unleſs there was a middle ſtate alſo between everlaſting happineſs and miſery, it is to be be fear'd, that the portion of theſe will fall with thoſe that are carnal.

THE ſum of what I have been endeavouring to prove throughout this diſcourſe is in ſhort this. Impurity of heart conſiſts in the doubleneſs of our intentions, and the inconſiſtency of our actions. Our intentions are then double, when we deſign to ſave our ſouls, and at the ſame time deſign to gratifie our luſts; our actions are then inconſiſtent, when at ſome times, and in ſome caſes, we gladly obey God's laws, and at other times, and in other caſes, as willingly diſobey them: this propoſing to our ſelves oppoſite ends, this going ſuch different ways, is a manifeſt indication, that our ſouls are not poſſeſs'd with a ſincere love of God; whilſt we are deſtitute of this ſincere love of God, we have not that grace which is made the very firſt and great condition of our everlaſting ſalvation; whilſt therefore we purſue theſe oppoſite ends, and act after this irregular and unſteady manner, we cannot with reaſon entertain any comfortable hopes of our being ſav'd at the great day of trial. As much therefore as it concerns us to have well-grounded hopes of everlaſting ſalvation, ſo much it concerns us to endeavour after that purity
Pſal. 24. 3. of heart which our Apoſtle here recommends. *Who ſhall aſcend into the hill of the Lord, and who ſhall ſtand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands,* ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *and a pure heart: he ſhall receive the bleſſing from the Lord, and righteouſneſs from the God of his ſalvation.* For which bleſſing God of his infinite mercy prepare us all.

SER-

SERMON XXXVII.

The Sinfulneſs of Double-mindedneſs.

JAMES IV. 8.

-----*Purifie your hearts, ye Double-minded.*

The fourth ſermon on this Text.

NO ſort of men have afforded a larger field of raillery to thoſe, who have made it their buſineſs to laugh at the follies of mankind; none have more expos'd themſelves to the ſharpeſt cenſures of ſuch, as have taken upon them to laſh the vices of others, than thoſe who have been remarkable for
vity of mind, unſteadineſs of reſolution, unevenneſs of temper, and
conſiſtency in their actions. When the writers of comedy have en-
avour'd to divert their ſpectators with a ſubject thoroughly ridiculous,
ey have never better ſucceeded in this deſign, than by drawing to the
e the character of a fickle and unconſtant perſon; and when thoſe, who
ave had a talent at ſatyr, have tried to provoke the choler, and raiſe
e indignation, of their readers, they have never done it more effectual-
, than by the ſevere reflections they have paſt upon perſons of the ſame
neven character. How often are we entertain'd by ancient wits with
e images of thoſe changeable perſons, who are always at variance with
emſelves; who deſpiſe what before they had valued, and then again
lue what they had juſt now deſpis'd; who haſtily throw away what
ey had got with pains and difficulty, and preſently grow fond of that
hich they had juſt before careleſly thrown away; who love ſolitude
d retirement, when they are in a croud, and when they are retir'd, are
neaſie for want of company: who praiſe a married-life, when they are
ngle; and a ſingle-life, when they are married: who in their looks are
metimes jovial, and at other times demure; in their dreſs ſometimes
y, and at other times ſordid; in their expences ſometimes prodigal, and
t other times niggardly; in their tempers ſometimes aiery, and at other
mes moroſe; in ſhort, who are any ways, in their opinions, their de-
gns, their actions, or their paſſions, diſagreeable with themſelves, and
nequal.

And as this unevenneſs hath always been laught at by witty men, and expos'd by ill-natur'd men; ſo hath it alſo been much lamented by the beſt and wiſeſt of men, as the great infirmity of human nature. If any one age, ſex, or condition of men hath been look'd on as weaker than another, this inconſtancy hath been always urg'd as a ſufficient proof of that weakneſs. Whatever ſchemes therefore have been contriv'd for making men better and wiſer, for reſcuing them from folly and from miſery, and for perfecting their natures, conſtancy hath been always made one chief ingredient of virtue, wiſdom, and happineſs; and it hath been look'd upon as utterly impoſſible, that any one ſhould be in any tolerable meaſure good, wiſe, or happy, who was not at the ſame time fix'd, reſolute, and ſteady.

But that variableneſs and inſtability, which is ſo great a blemiſh to men's characters, and which expoſes them to ſo many inconveniencies in civil life, is much more ſcandalous, and much more pernicious, in matters of morality and Religion; and that conſtancy and ſteadineſs, which are requir'd in every one, who would ſucceed in any deſign whatever which he undertakes, are much more requiſite in that, which ought to be the principal and main deſign of our whole lives, the *working out our own ſalvation.* Hence is it that ſuch great care hath been taken in Scripture to preſs upon us the neceſſity of keeping this end always in our view, and of purſuing it with conſtancy and perſeverance: we
1 Cor. 15. 58. are requir'd to *be ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work*
1 Cor. 10. 12. *of the Lord*: thoſe who *think* they *ſtand*, are warn'd to *take heed, leſt*
c. 16. v. 13. *they fall*: all are exhorted to *watch, to ſtand faſt in the faith*, to *quit themſelves like men*, in oppoſition to the inſtability of children, and to
2 John. 8. *be ſtrong*: *to look to themſelves, that they loſe not thoſe things which*
Rev. 3. 8. *they have gain'd*; *to be watchful*, and to *ſtrengthen the things which remain*: to *run on, and not to be weary*: *to walk, and not to faint*: hav-
Luk. 9. 62. *ing* once *put their hands to the plough, not to look back*, but to *hold faſt*
Rev. 3. 11. *that which they have, that no man take their crown* from them. *Eter-*
Rom. 2. 7. *nal life* is promis'd only to ſuch, *who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality*: but againſt them which fall ſeverity is denounc'd; towards them that ſtand the goodneſs of God is ſhewn; but with this reſtriction, if they continue in that goodneſs; otherwiſe they alſo are threatned to be cut off.

Now, that we ſhould thus perſevere in our Chriſtian courſe; that we ſhould be thus watchful, ſtedfaſt, and unwearied in it, is utterly impoſſible, unleſs our intentions be wholly bent on this one neceſſary thing; unleſs the whole ſtreſs of our faculties be employ'd in this one great work; unleſs our heart be entirely fix'd upon it, as our ultimate and main end, to which all our other deſigns ought to be ſubordinate. I thought therefore I could not recommend to you any excellence more worthy your earneſt ſtriving after, any duty of greater weight and importance, than this ſingleneſs of intention; or, which is all one, the making the ſalvation of your immortal ſouls that one great end, to which all your other actions, thoughts, and purpoſes ſhould be ſubſervient; ſo as that you ſhould aim at no other end ſo eagerly as at this: you ſhould ſtop at no other end ſhort of this; you ſhould propoſe to your ſelves no other end, which might interfere with this; you ſhould not allow your ſelves in the doing any one thing, which might hinder your attainment of this; nor ſhould at any time, upon any occaſion or pretence, omit any thing which might farther you in compaſſing this end, as being an end without

the attainment of which you muſt be eternally miſerable, tho' you
uld ſucceed in all other deſigns; and which if you do ſecure to your
es, you will be finally happy, tho' you ſhould be diſappointed in all
r other endeavours and undertakings.

In order therefore to preſs upon you this momentous duty, I pro-
'd to ſhew, and have already in great meaſure ſhewn,

. The folly of purſuing two ſuch oppoſite ends, as the ſerving God, and gratifying our luſts, that this ſingleneſs of heart, whereby we give up our ſelves wholly and entirely to the ſervice of God, might recommend it ſelf to your choice, on account of the wiſdom it argues.

I. The uneaſineſs of purſuing two ſuch oppoſite ends, that this ſimplicity of intention might appear to you ſtill farther deſirable, in regard of the pleaſure that attends it.

II. The ſinfulneſs of aiming at two ſuch oppoſite ends, that this purity of heart might recommend it ſelf to your practice, in reſpect of its abſolute and indiſpenſable neceſſity to your eternal ſalvation.

The two firſt of theſe heads I have already diſpatch'd; the third I
red upon, but did not go thro' with. The two former motives I
de uſe of, as proper to work upon thoſe who would approve them-
es wiſe, or who had a value for their own eaſe and quiet of mind:
this laſt motive is better ſuited to the generality of mankind, as be-
adapted to prevail upon all who have a deſire to be ſav'd; becauſe,
thout this ſingleneſs of intention, ſalvation is not attainable. For
d, who hath power to ſave or to deſtroy us, who is the diſpoſer of
rnal rewards and puniſhments, doth not diſpenſe theſe to men arbi-
rily and at random, but by ſet rules and meaſures, which he in his
inite wiſdom hath preſcrib'd to himſelf. What thoſe terms are, upon
ich every one may hope to be ſav'd, God hath, in his infinite good-
ſs, open'd unto us in the holy Scriptures: we there find the chara-
rs of good and bad men, the diſtinctions of duty and ſin, and the
arks of ſuch as are in a ſtate of ſalvation or damnation, fully and plain-
ſet forth. God hath there, for our better direction in the paths of
ppineſs, declar'd unto us upon what conditions we may expect the
ſiſtance of his grace here, and the fruition of his glory hereafter; and
ſingleneſs of heart is either in expreſs terms, or by neceſſary conſe-
ence, made one of thoſe conditions, then will it be in vain for us to
tter our ſelves with the fooliſh hopes of ever partaking of the promiſes
the Goſpel, whilſt we fulfill not this condition. One, and the chief
ticle of the Chriſtian covenant is the love God; ſuch a love of him,
hich if it doth not exclude the love of all other beings beſides him,
ſome teach; yet it doth not admit the love of any other being more
an of him, or equally with him, as all agree. Now ſuch a love of
od, as is ſuperior to the love of all other beings, is not conſiſtent with
oſe double intentions, whereby we propoſe to our ſelves the promo-
ng our carnal intereſt equally with our ſpiritual; nor with thoſe divi-
ed affections, whereby we ſet our hearts as much upon the things of this
orld, as upon the things above; and conſequently thoſe, whoſe hearts
re ſo divided between both, being deſtitute of the true love of God
hilſt they continue ſo, cannot have any rational aſſurance of their be-
ng within the terms of ſalvation.

I GO on now to prove farther the ſinfulneſs and danger of ſuch do ble intentions, and ſuch uneven, partial, and broken obedience, fro its inconſiſtency with that perfection, which is another condition of th Goſpel-covenant, and another condition requir'd in all Chriſtians to the everlaſting ſalvation.

I OBSERV'D to you before, that there were diſputes among Divin concerning the true meaſures of the love of God; but at the ſame tim I ſhew'd you, that our argument was not concern'd in the iſſue of thoſe diſputes, becauſe, which way ſoever thoſe diſputes turn'd, whatever were the right meaſures of the love of God, double-mindedneſs was i conſiſtent with that loweſt meaſure and degree of it, which all were agree was abſolutely neceſſary to make it acceptable to God, as being the lowe degree of affection which could poſſibly be underſtood to be intended i the divine commandment. And the ſame thing happens here again i reference to that perfection, which the Goſpel requires in all Chriſtians. Great diſputes there are, always have been, and among ſpeculative men probably always will be, concerning the meaſures of perfection, which are preſcrib'd to us in the holy Scripture: but it is matter of great comfort to ſimple and well-meaning Chriſtians, who are not able to enter into theſe niceties, and to judge on which ſide the truth lies in theſe intricate queſtions, that their practice doth not at all depend upon the iſſue of theſe debates; but that it is plain what they ought to do, which way ſoever theſe queſtions are determin'd. Thus, however the meaſures of Chriſtian perfection are ſtated; whether we raiſe them up to the utmoſt height at which they are plac'd by the moſt rigorous opinions, or ſink them down to the loweſt pitch to which they are brought by the moſt favourable conſtruction; double-mindedneſs will be prov'd to be a ſinful and dangerous ſtate of ſoul, as being inconſiſtent with that loweſt point of perfection, which it is agreed on all hands is the indiſpenſable duty of all true and ſincere Chriſtians, and a neceſſary condition of our eternal ſalvation.

PERFECTION, according to the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word, ſignifies an exemption from all defect: for nothing is entirely perfect, which wants any good quality it ought to have; or which hath any ill quality, it ought to be free from. And if we underſtand perfection in this rigorous ſenſe, it will include in its notion an exemption from all kinds, and all degrees of ſin; and the completion of all kinds, and all degrees of holineſs: ſo that no one will come within the character of perfect, but he who conſtantly and inviolably obeys the laws of God, by performing all ſuch works, both inward and outward, as each command requires, after that manner, upon thoſe views, and out of thoſe regards, which the law preſcribes. And if we ſhould look upon ſome texts of Scripture abſtractedly from all others; if we ſhould attend to the bare letter and ſound of them, without examining them by other texts, and interpreting them by the analogy of faith; we might be induc'd, at firſt ſight, to think ſuch an abſolute, ſpotleſs, and entire perfection requir'd at our hands.
Mat. 5. 48. Our Saviour commands us to *be perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect*; and the perfection of God, we know, excludes not only all kinds, but all degrees of imperfection; and includes not only all ſorts, but the higheſt meaſures of all ſorts of perfection. Chriſt is
Epheſ. 5. 25, ſaid to have *given himſelf for the Church, that he might ſanctifie and*
26, 27. *cleanſe it with the waſhing of water, by the Word; that he might preſent it to himſelf a glorious Church, not having ſpot or wrinkle, or any*

ſuch

ch thing; but that it ſhould be holy, and without blemiſh. Now by
e Church we are to underſtand Chriſtians; and if they are to be thus
nctified and cleans'd; if they are to be *without ſpot or wrinkle, or*
y ſuch thing; if they muſt be *holy and without blemiſh*; then muſt
ey be perfectly free from all ſin, which is a blemiſh to every ſoul
at is polluted with it.

The end of Chriſt's coming in the fleſh is ſaid to have been *to re-* Tit. 2. 14.
em us from all iniquity; to preſent us unto God, as a peculiar people,
rified by faith, zealous of good works; holy and unblameable and un- Col. 1. 22.
proveable in God's ſight; entire and wanting nothing, *perfect and com-* c. 4. 12.
te in all the will of God. Now, if we ſhould examine the double-
nded by this ſtandard of perfection, it is plain that they fall much
ort of it; but then it is alſo too evident, that the moſt ſpiritual and
avenly-minded themſelves muſt ſtand condemn'd at God's tribunal, if
ey put themſelves upon this kind of trial. But God forbid we ſhould
nclude the ſtate of any one Chriſtian to be dangerous, becauſe he wants
at degree of perfection, which we are not ſure is poſſible to be attain'd;
d which other as expreſs Scriptures as thoſe which have been cited,
aſſure us no Saint of God ever yet did attain. Our Apoſtle St. *James,*
ho here requires of us purity of heart, lays down this as an uncon-
llable truth, that *in many things we offend all*: and the Apoſtle Jam. 3. 2.
John, who hath taught us, that *he that committeth ſin is of the de-* 1 Joh. 3. 8.
, and that *whoſoever is born of God doth not commit ſin, nay cannot* v. 9.
, doth nevertheleſs as plainly teach, that *if we ſay we have no ſin,* c. 1. 8.
deceive our ſelves, and the truth is not in us; and yet farther, that
ſuch a pretenſion to unſpotted holineſs, we do not only deceive our
ves, but that we repreſent God as a deceiver; for he adds, *if we ſay* v. 10.
at we have not ſinn'd, we make God a liar, and his Word is not
us.

Now if perfection is the mark of God's children, as the Word of
od every where makes it; and if there is no Saint of God that ſinneth
t, as the ſame Word over and over again inſtructs us; then can we
t, without making one text of Scripture claſh againſt another, ſup-
ſe that the perfection requir'd in the Goſpel, as a neceſſary condition
our being ſav'd, includes in it a freedom from all ſin. Sure we are
at thoſe, who in Scripture are honour'd with the character of per-
ct, did not arrogate to themſelves an exemption from all manner of
n; for at the ſame time that their eminent virtues and graces are pro-
os'd to us as patterns, which we ought to imitate, their failings alſo
e deliver'd down to us, both for our better caution, that we ſhould
careful to avoid the like, and alſo for our conſolation, that, if after
l our care and diligence, we ſhould be over-born by temptation, yet
e might not deſpair. Holy *Job* had this character given him by God
imſelf, that *there was none like him upon the earth, a perfect and* Job. 1. 8.
n upright man, one that fear'd God, and eſchewed evil. And yet the
me holy perſon, when he ſets himſelf before the tribunal of God's ju-
ice, dares not ſtand out in his own juſtification, but ſubmits himſelf
o the mercy of his Judge, with humble ſupplications for favour and
orgiveneſs. *How ſhould man,* ſaith he, *be juſt with God? If he con-* c. 9. 2. 3.
end with him, he cannot anſwer him one of a thouſand. If I would ju- v. 20.
ſtifie my ſelf, mine own mouth would condemn me; if I ſay, I am per-
ect, it ſhall alſo prove me perverſe. If I waſh my ſelf with ſnow- v. 30, 31.
water, and make my hands never ſo clean; yet ſhalt thou plunge me in

Job. 9. 32. *the ditch, and mine own cloaths ſhall abhor me. For he is not a man as I am, that I ſhould anſwer him, and that we ſhould come together in judgment.*

Now if thoſe, who are perfect in God's ſight, are not clear from all ſin in their own judgment, and much leſs are guiltleſs in the ſight of God; then may we ſafely by perfection underſtand ſomething ſhort of ſpotleſs innocence, and conſummate holineſs. At leaſt ſuch a perfection as this, if it be preſcrib'd as a duty, which of right we ought to perform; yet ſurely is it not requir'd as a condition, without the performance of which we cannot be ſav'd. If we both could, and actually did, arrive to ſuch an abſolute perfection, we ſhould do no more than we are bound to do, and could not pretend to have gone beyond our duty: but tho' we neither actually do reach that eminent height of perfection, nor, whilſt we are cloath'd with fleſh and blood, are perhaps able to reach it; yet thro' the mercies of God, and the merits of Chriſt, we may hope to be ſav'd. But tho' ſuch a ſpotleſs perfection, as hath been deſcrib'd, is not perhaps with our utmoſt endeavours to be attain'd; yet by thoſe frequent commands in Scripture, whereby we are requir'd to be perfect, nothing leſs can be meant, than that we ſhould uſe our utmoſt endeavours towards the compaſſing this perfection. For it is a wrong notion to think that we are bound to aim at nothing, but what we have ſure and certain hopes of attaining: that indeed cannot by a juſt and gracious God be peremptorily requir'd of us in order to our ſalvation, which it is not in our power to perform; but that may be the object of our endeavour, which we ſhall never actually compaſs.
Heb. 12. 14. As we are commanded *to follow peace with all men*, tho' we muſt deſpair of ever obtaining, what we are always bound to purſue; ſo are we requir'd to go on to perfection, tho', when we have gone as far as in this life we can go, we ſhall not after all come up to it.

The difficulty therefore of arriving at perfection ought not to be urg'd as an excuſe for our not attempting it, but to quicken our care, and to ſtir up our vigilance, and make us exert our moſt vigorous endeavours, that we may ſucceed, as far as it is poſſible to ſucceed, in this glorious attempt. We ought in this matter to copy after that example, which St. *Paul* hath ſet us; he had made as great advances towards heaven as any one, but he did not therefore ſlacken his courſe: if he look'd back upon what he had been, and conſider'd what he now was, he muſt needs find that he had gone a great way towards perfection; but, when he conſider'd what he ſtill was, and look'd forward to what he ought to be, he could not but acknowledge that he had a great way ſtill to go: he imitates therefore an expert racer, who doth not regard how much ground he hath run over, but how much more remains yet
Philip. 3. 12, 13, 14. to be run, before he can reach the goal. *Not as tho' I had already attain'd*, ſaith he, *either were already perfect*; *but I follow after*, if *that I may apprehend that for which alſo I am apprehended of Chriſt Jeſus. Brethren, I count not my ſelf to have apprehended*; *but this one thing I do, forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus.*

The leaſt we can poſſibly underſtand by thoſe characters of a perfect man, which are given us in the Goſpel, is this; that the image of a perfect Chriſtian is there accurately drawn, that we might have an exact copy, which we ought to write by, tho' with all our skill and diligence

gence we cannot equal it. Thoſe who have given rules concerning the
tainment of any art, have always thought it proper to draw the cha-
cter of a perſon perfect in that art: they obſerv'd, that nothing had
ver been done ſo well by the beſt artificers, but that ſomething might
imagin'd ſtill better: when therefore they undertook to give the pat-
rn of an accompliſh'd artiſt, they did not deſcribe one whom they had
ver ſeen, or heard, or read of; but one, of whom they had only a
re conception in their minds; one, who had all the excellencies united
himſelf, which the beſt artiſts had ſeverally been eminent for; one,
ho was free from all the defects, which artiſts, otherwiſe excellent in
eir way, had labour'd under; one, in ſhort, who was more perfect
an ever any artiſt had been, or would be, and as perfect as could poſ-
ly be imagin'd. And when they drew ſuch a pattern of an accom-
iſh'd artiſt as this, they did it not to diſcourage their ſcholars from
ying to attain to ſuch a degree of excellence, which they muſt deſpair
ever reaching; but to ſtir up their emulation, and whet their indu-
y, that, by imitating the beſt patterns, they might be ſure, tho' not
do ſo well, yet to do their utmoſt. If, after all their endeavours to
cel, they fell ſhort of that perfect model, which was ſet before them;
t it was to very good purpoſe that ſuch an exact copy was ſet them,
cauſe by aiming ſo high they were ſecure from ſinking very low.

Now if we ſhould ſuppoſe, which is the leaſt that poſſibly can be
ppos'd, that the character of a Chriſtian which is given us in the Go-
l, is not the image of ſuch a Chriſtian as ever was, or as ever will be,
as any one needs to be; but that it is the draught of a finiſh'd and
compliſh'd Saint, propos'd as an enſample, by which we ought to
rm our lives, tho' we muſt never hope to equal that copy; yet, even
cording to this ſuppoſition, it will be our duty to ſummon up all our
igence, and to uſe our utmoſt caution, that we may not, thro' any
lful neglect, fall ſhort of it: tho' we cannot come up to the beauty of
original, when we have done all we can; yet we muſt not think our
ves excuſable, if we fail of doing what we can: where we cannot ar-
e at the higheſt top of perfection, we muſt climb as far as our ſtrength
ll permit; and, by ſtriving after thoſe higheſt degrees of excellence,
hich, after all our ſtriving, are not to be attain'd, we muſt take care
riſe to thoſe lower degrees, which are attainable.

If abſolute perfection were the only condition upon which men might
pe to be ſav'd, then there would be no room for repentance, which
t is the great and fundamental doctrine of the Goſpel. But it is mat-
r of unſpeakable comfort to an honeſt ſincere Chriſtian, that if at any
me, thro' the prevalence of temptation, he hath ſwerv'd from his du-
, and departed from the paths of righteouſneſs, yet his caſe is not
ite deſperate; *there is mercy with God,* and there is room for him Pſal. 130. 4.
recover the divine favour, by a timely and unfeign'd repentance. But
en the uſe which a good Chriſtian, and one who aims at perfection,
akes of this doctrine, is, not to be careleſs of his duty, becauſe, if he
anſgreſſes the Law, he may repent; but only to repent, when, for
ant of ſufficient care, he hath trangreſs'd. He doth not think of re-
ntance before he ſins, to encourage him in ſinning; but he flies to it
ter he hath ſinn'd, to reſcue himſelf from the dominion of ſin. His
ſt care is to be perfect, and entirely innocent; and when this fails him,
too often it will fail him, his next aim, which is then his only refuge,
to be ſincerely penitent. He is diligent ſo to order the whole courſe

of

of his life, as if there were no ſuch thing poſſible as the reinſtating himſelf in God's favour, when he hath once forfeited it by any wilful tranſgreſſion; but when he finds that he hath juſtly forfeited it, he then makes haſte to reconcile himſelf to God, by a ſpeedy converſion.

No wiſe man is leſs careful to direct his ſteps aright, becauſe if he ſhould ſlip, he may recover his ground; for he conſiders that there is danger in the fall; that he may not be able quickly to get up again; that after he hath raiſ'd himſelf, he may not go on ſo faſt as he did before; that if he ſhould find no other miſchief from falling, yet this is one unavoidable diſadvantage, that he loſes that time in recovering his ground, which had been better employ'd in advancing forwards. There are few diſtempers ſo deſperate, but that nature hath provided, and art found out, ſome remedy for them; but no man who hath any regard to his health, but will take all the care poſſible to avoid the diſeaſe, tho', if it ſhould ſeize him, he hath a fair proſpect of recovery. For, as it is poſſible he may eſcape, ſo is it poſſible at the ſame time that he may not; tho' there are medicines which will cure him, yet he may put off the taking them too long, or may leave off the taking them too ſoon. But be it never ſo ſure that he ſhall recover, yet there is uneaſineſs to be felt, whilſt he continues ill; when his diſtemper is gone, ſome reliques of it may ſtill remain behind; or if he ſhould perfectly recover his health and ſtrength, and be as whole as before, yet he is at laſt but where he was; and if health be a valuable thing, it was better to have kept it, than it is to regain it.

What health is to the body, that innocence or perfection is to the ſoul; and if we have the ſame value for our ſouls, which we have for our bodies, we ſhall no more think it adviſable to neglect the preſerving our ſelves innocent from all ſin, becauſe, if we do amiſs, we may repent, than we think it prudent to neglect the means of preſerving our health, becauſe, if we do fall ſick, we may recover. Repentance is by the ancients frequently compar'd to a plank after ſhip-wrack: when we are in danger of periſhing, and have no other way to eſcape, we muſt lay hold on this; but we muſt not ſo far truſt to this, as not to be diligent to avoid every *rock of offence*, againſt which we may chance to ſplit. Abſolute perfection is not to be attain'd, and therefore repentance comes in to ſupply the want of it: but a ſincere endeavour after perfection is poſſible; and he who ſins with a reſolution to repent, is not ſure that God will give him grace to repent in time of need.

Now, if an endeavour after perfection; if the ſtriving to come up to the height of what God requires of us; if doing the utmoſt we can do *in all things to keep a conſcience void of offence*, is confeſs'd on all hands to be the leaſt that can be meant by that perfection, which is th condition of our ſalvation; then muſt double-minded perſons be in very dangerous ſtate, who cannot pretend that they perform this co dition. For can that perſon be ſaid to uſe his utmoſt endeavours to b perfect, who, tho' he reſiſts ſome temptations, yet not only yields t but even invites, others? Doth he do all he can do to approve himſel to God, who doth as many actions, which he knows to be diſpleaſi to God, as he doth actions acceptable and pleaſing? Can his heart b ſaid to be perfect with the Lord his God, whoſe affections are equal divided betwixt God and the world? Can his life be ſaid to be perfe whoſe blemiſhes and ſpots are as eminent and conſpicuous, as his vi tues? Can he be thought to copy after a perfect pattern, whoſe tranſcri

full of groſs and palpable errors? Can he be thought in earneſt to
reſs forwards towards the mark, whoſe retreats are equal to his ad-
ances? Who is always in motion, but rids no ground; and who, after
ome years ſpent in a courſe of Religion, is got no farther than when
e at firſt ſet out? As well may he be thought a perfect ſcholar, who,
that part of learning he profeſſes, is ignorant of as many things as
e knows; or that be deem'd a perfect animal, which, of thoſe limbs
ſhould have, wants as many as it hath; or which is deſtitute of as
any organs of ſenſe, as it enjoys.

And as this double-mindedneſs is inconſiſtent with that ſuperlative
ve of God, and that eminent degree of perfection, which are indiſ-
enſably requir'd in all Chriſtians; ſo is it alſo with that ſincere faith,
hich is another branch of that Evangelical covenant, upon the obſer-
ance of which on our part we expect ſalvation.

Of the neceſſity of faith to ſalvation no doubt hath been ever made;
l the queſtion hath been concerning its ſufficiency. Some have pleaded
much for the efficacy of this alone, that they have allow'd nothing
ſe beſides it to be neceſſary: but no one hath ever denied, but this
mongſt other conditions was abſolutely neceſſary. Now that faith which
requir'd in all Chriſtians, I mean that ſaving faith which alone can
ail them, is utterly incompatible with that maim'd and imperfect obe-
ence, which is paid to the precepts of the Goſpel by the double-minded.
r faith, if it be ſincere, and founded upon a true bottom, doth not
ck and chuſe ſome reveal'd truths, but gives an equal and uniform
ſent to all. It doth not embrace the ſpeculative truths of the Goſpel,
hich are generally more obſcure and controverted; and at the ſame
me reject thoſe practical truths, which are plain and unconteſted. And
nong practical truths, it doth not partially take ſome, and leave others;
t embraces all, which are equally well atteſted, with an equal rea-
neſs of aſſent. But if we examine the faith of a double-minded per-
n; if we try it by that, which our Apoſtle St. *James* hath made the
ly true teſt of a lively faith, that is, by its works; we ſhall not find
thus general and impartial. He finds gracious promiſes in the Goſpel
nex'd to the performance of ſome duties, and theſe he pretends to diſ-
arge, on purpoſe that he may inherit thoſe precious promiſes: but
finds alſo ſevere threats denounc'd againſt ſome ſins; and, notwith-
anding theſe threats, he goes on in a conſtant habitual commiſſion of
em. Now how is his performance of theſe duties a better proof that
heartily believes thoſe promiſes, than his voluntary tranſgreſſions
e, that in his heart he disbelieves thoſe threats? At ſome times he
ſiſts the temptations to ſin, becauſe of the ill conſequences, which his
ith aſſures him will attend it; but at other times he tamely yields to
e very ſame temptations, and deliberately commits the very ſame ſin,
ſpight of that long train of miſchiefs, which it will unavoidably draw
fter it.

Now, how comes that to be credible at one time, which is not cre-
ible at another? Or, if at all times it be equally credible, that the ſin,
which he is going to commit, will expoſe him to the wrath of God, why
s not that, which is equally in it ſelf credible, equally by him believ'd?
And yet, if it be at all times equally believ'd, why is not this faith as
trong to overcome the temptation at one time, as it is at another? That
Scripture, which the double-minded perſon profeſſes to make the rule
of his faith, aſſures him, that *the wicked worketh a deceitful work, but* Prov. 11. 18.

to him that ſoweth righteouſneſs ſhall be a ſure reward. There are ſeveral wicked works therefore, which he dares not venture upon, leſt in the end they ſhould prove deceitful; and there are ſeveral righteous actions, which he performs in proſpect of this reward. But ſtill there are other works as deceitful, which he knowingly worketh, and ſeveral righteous actions, to which as ſure a recompence is promis'd, which he deliberately omits. When a petty advantage is offer'd to allure him to an act of injuſtice, his conſcience, as he thinks, but in truth his avarice, rejects it; and he is apt to ſay to himſelf, on this occaſion, *what is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* Now if this be a good anſwer to this temptation, it is as good an anſwer to another temptation of the ſame kind. But let the tempter bid higher, let a larger bribe be offer'd, tho' it falls much ſhort of the whole world; yet he ſhall think his ſoul well ſold at the price, and ſhall act as if he look'd upon himſelf as a gainer by the exchange.

Mat. 16. 26.

IT is evident from the whole tenour of Scripture, that there is no ſin which doth not offend God, and draw down upon us his indignation; that his anger is the moſt terrible evil that can befall us; that it is unavoidable, ſo that the ſinner cannot eſcape it; that it is inſupportable, ſo that he cannot bear it; that conſequently, all things being *rightly* weigh'd, it is much more advantageous not to ſin, than it is to ſin; and yet the double-minded perſon, who pretends to be convinc'd of all theſe truths, and in the ſtrength of that conviction to reſiſt many ſins, from which he might reap conſiderable profit or pleaſure, doth allow himſelf in the practice of other ſins purely on account of the profit they bring, and the pleaſure that accompanies them. Now, how are theſe things conſiſtent? How can we reconcile theſe repugnant actions to one another? But above all, how can we think them compatible with a ſteady, firm, unſhaken belief of thoſe principles, which are in words profeſs'd, but by facts, which ſpeak plainer than words, are manifeſtly denied? Is it not much more probable that thoſe ſeemingly good actions, which ſuch an unſteady perſon ſometimes performs, proceed from ſome other principle than a firm belief of the Goſpel, than that theſe manifeſtly evil actions can be done by one, who ſincerely believes the Word of God? Some ſuſpicions he, who acts thus unevenly, may have, upon ſome occaſions, that the doctrine of the Goſpel may be true, and in thoſe religious moods he may follow the directions it gives to quiet his fears; but ſtill he often ſurmiſes, that after all it may be falſe, and therefore, when theſe ſurmiſes are uppermoſt in his thoughts, and at the ſame time a preſent advantage is to be got by ſin, he is not for quitting what is at hand and certain, for that which is at a diſtance, and uncertain. There is no doubt, but thoſe who act thus unſteadily and inconſiſtently, if they were ask'd whether they believ'd all the truths of the Goſpel, would think it a rude queſtion, and would take it ill to have their faith thus impeach'd; nay, it is poſſible, that when they put the queſtion to themſelves, they may anſwer it in the affirmative. But it is no better a proof, that one, whoſe actions ſhew him to be an infidel, is a true believer, becauſe he calls and thinks himſelf ſo, than it is that that poor deluded madman is truly rich and powerful, who, at the ſame time that he begs and ſtarves, ſtiles and fancies himſelf a prince or emperor.

I MIGHT go on to prove the danger and ſinfulneſs of being double- inded, and the neceſſity of that purity of heart, and ſingleneſs of in- ntion, which St. *James* here preſſes, from other topicks; but I hope hat hath been ſaid of its inconſiſtency with the love of God, with per- ction, and with faith, is ſufficient to convince thoſe, who are willing be perſwaded. I would not be miſunderſtood, as if I had in any of e diſcourſes I have made on this copious ſubject, condemn'd all care r the things of this world; all proviſion for the neceſſities and conve- iencies of this life; all purſuit of temporal bleſſings, and lawful plea- res, as inconſiſtent with that purity of heart, and ſingleneſs of inten- on, which our Apoſtle here enjoyns. When I recommend to you the aking God's glory, and your own ſalvation, your only end, I mean more, than that this ſhould be your main end. You may propoſe your ſelves other deſigns which fall in with this, and which promote is; but you muſt aim at none, which interfere with this; none but hat are capable of being ſo manag'd as to be ſerviceable to this.

WE are made up of ſouls and bodies; the appetites of the body are craving and ſo loud, that there is no danger of our forgetting to ſup- y their wants: but the neceſſities of our ſouls are not ſo importunate d clamorous; and therefore there is great danger, leſt we ſhould be mindful of them. When both can be at once lawfully gratified, both curely may: but when *the fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit*; when the e of the world would ſet us at enmity with God, then I would have r greateſt and moſt durable intereſt determine our choice. The ma- n upon which thoſe who are reſolv'd to thrive in this world proceed, known to be this: an eſtate is to be had; if it can be got honeſtly, much the better; but if not, yet ſtill an eſtate muſt be got. Now I uld have the principle, upon which the ſincere Chriſtian acts, the re- rſe of this. My buſineſs is to ſerve God, and to ſave my own ſoul; I can ſave my ſoul without any damage to my body, or to my eſtate, will do it; but if not, yet ſtill I muſt remember, that I have a ſoul be ſav'd. Whatever therefore we take in hand, let us remember this our end; let us purſue this end, and we ſhall never do amiſs.

SER-

SERMON XXXVIII.

Preach'd before the

QUEEN,

On *Nov.* 5. 1705.

Matt. X. 16.

Behold, I ſend you forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves; be ye therefore wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves.

THE holy Evangeliſt hath given us, in this chapter, an authentick copy of a commiſſion, which iſſued from the higheſt authority; which convey'd the fulleſt powers, that were ever granted to any of the ſons of men; which was not to be executed without the utmoſt difficulty and danger; but was accompanied with ſuch inſtructions, as, if duly obſerv'd, would render all difficulties ſuperable, and be a ſure guard againſt all dangers. This commiſſion was given to the Apoſtles by our Saviour, *the bleſſed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*: its purport was to reſcue, not one people or nation, but the whole race of mankind, from a ſtate of the moſt abject and wretched ſlavery; to put an end to the tyranny of a proud and cruel uſurper; and to eſtabliſh the kingdom of God upon earth. Such a deſign as this, which threatned an entire overthrow to the dominion of Satan, would be ſure to meet with all the oppoſition, that the fury of hell could raiſe againſt it: and tho', from the ſucceſs of it, men might promiſe to themſelves the moſt perfect liberty, and an affluence of the greateſt bleſſings; yet they were grown ſo much in love with their chains, and were ſo inſenſible of their true intereſt, that they alſo would unite all their forces to ſtop the progreſs, to defeat the enterprize, and to outrage the perſons of thoſe, who came for their deliverance. The meſſage, which

the

e Apoſtles were to carry into all places, whither they were to go, as *Peace upon earth, and good will towards men*: but the entertain- Luk. 2. 14. ent they were every where to look for, was hatred, perſecution, and eath. They muſt not hope, that the ſacredneſs of their character, and e majeſty of him by whom they were ſent, would ſecure them from dignities and wrongs: for they were to repreſent a deſpis'd, inſulted, nd perſecuted Maſter; and from the reception which he had found, ight plainly foreſee, what ſort of treatment they were to expect. *The iſciple*, he tells them, *is not above his maſter, nor the ſervant above* v. 24. *s lord: it is enough for the diſciple, that he be as his maſter, and the rvant as his lord* Naked, and unarm'd they were to expoſe them- lves to the rage of a ſtiff-neck'd, hard-hearted, and mercileſs people: gainſt ſuch they are taught to provide, and are allow'd to uſe no other rms, than wiſdom and innocence.

BEHOLD, *I ſend you forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves; be ye herefore wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves.*

THE wiſdom of the ſerpent might ſeem to include, in the notion of t, ſome degrees of ſubtlety and guile; the ſimplicity of the dove might e thought to intimate ſome defect of warineſs and prudence: our Sa- iour therefore requires ſuch a temperature of both, that what was anting in either, might be ſupplied from the ſuperabundance of the ther; ſo that from their conjunction might reſult perfect wiſdom, free om all guile; and a well-guarded innocence, without the leaſt mixture f indiſcretion.

HIGHER degrees of wiſdom and integrity were requiſite in the Apo- les, than are abſolutely neceſſary to every diſciple of Chriſt: for they ere to lay the firſt foundations of that Church, againſt which *the gates f hell were never to prevail*; and their eminence in wiſdom and vir- ue would, in a great meaſure, prevent the miſchief, that might re- ound to our holy faith from any defect of the like qualifications in oſe Chriſtians, who ſhould come after them. But ſince the Church f God in all ages is beſt preſerv'd by the ſame methods, by which it as at firſt eſtabliſh'd, the ſame qualifications of prudence and innocence, hich were neceſſary for the planting of Chriſt's Church, are, tho' in ore ſcanty proportions, ſtill requiſite for its ſupport and maintenance. ut neither are equal meaſures of theſe graces at this time requir'd in l Chriſtians: much leſs detriment would enſue to the Church of God om the want of either of theſe in private perſons, who are only to dorn it with their lives, than from the like want in paſtors, who are guide it by their vigilance; or in magiſtrates, who are to protect it y their authority: and therefore larger proportions of wiſdom and in- egrity are requir'd in Princes, who are *to go out and come in before God's eople*, than are neceſſary in thoſe, who, being plac'd under their govern- ent, reap the benefit of their wiſe and juſt adminiſtration: a more lentiful ſhare of God's *Urim* and *Thummim*, brightneſs of underſtand- ng, and perfection of virtue, ought to reſt upon his *Holy Ones, who re*, by their doctrine and example, *to teach* Jacob *God's judgments, and* ſrael *his laws*, than are of neceſſity requir'd in thoſe, who are *to ſeek he law at their mouths*. But tho' higher degrees of wiſdom and inno- ence are requir'd in ſome Chriſtians, than in others; yet the duties hemſelves are not appropriated to any orders of men: all who are num- red among the ſheep of Chriſt, all who are in the midſt of wolves, are oncern'd in this wholſome advice of our Saviour, *Be ye wiſe as ſer- ents, and harmleſs as doves.*

WERE wiſdom and innocence ſo cloſely link'd together, that they were never to be found aſunder; or, were they ſingly ſufficient to the purpoſes of life, ſo that there was little or no harm from their being ſeparated, this precept of our Saviour would be leſs neceſſary: but the ill conſequences of their diſunion, the expediency of their conjunction, and conſequently the neceſſity of our obſerving this percept of our Lord, will evidently appear, if we take a view,

I. OF the great miſchiefs that ariſe from the want of wiſdom in thoſe that are harmleſs.
II. Of the ſtill greater miſchiefs that ariſe from the want of innocence in thoſe that are wiſe.
III. Of the mighty advantages that reſult from our being at the ſame time both *wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves.*

OF theſe heads I ſhall ſpeak in general, tho' not without an eye all along to our enemies of the *Church of Rome*; to whom I ſhall afterwards more particularly apply what ſhall have been deliver'd.

Firſt THEN let us take a view of the great miſchiefs that ariſe from the want of wiſdom in thoſe that are harmleſs.

THERE is ſo near an affinity between wiſdom and goodneſs, that according to the notions of the Moraliſts, prudence is an eſſential ingredient of every virtue; and even according to the language of holy Writ, which is much more to be depended upon, wiſdom and piety, folly and wickedneſs, are terms equivalent. But then this muſt be underſtood rather of the higheſt perfection of virtue conſider'd in theory, than of thoſe lower degrees of it, which are to be met with in common practice. For experience aſſures us, that there are many perſons whoſe hearts are ſincere and upright, and who make it their earneſt and unwearied ſtudy *to have a conſcience void of offence, both towards God, and towards man*; of whom notwithſtanding it muſt be confeſs'd, that they do not more excel others in virtue and piety, than they are ſurpaſs'd by others in ſharpneſs of wit, in ſubtlety of counſels, and depth of underſtanding. They have wiſdom ſufficient to ſave their own ſouls, and to obtain eternal happineſs in the life to come; but they have not circumſpection enough to eſpy, nor all the dexterity that is neceſſary to eſcape, thoſe manifold dangers, to which they are expos'd in their paſſage thro' a wicked and deceitful world. There is in them a ſweetneſs of nature, and tenderneſs of conſcience, which will not ſuffer them to do the leaſt injury to any: hence they are not apt to ſuſpect any evil intentions in others towards them; and, for want of this due caution, are unprovided againſt the attempts of crafty and ill-deſigning men. They form their judgments of mankind, not from obſervations of what is done abroad, which theſe good men ſeldom make, but from reflections upon what paſſes within their own breaſts, which they are much more intent upon. Hence they frame a probable opinion of the integrity of others, from what they certainly know of their own: and as it hath been obſerv'd to be a frequent error, and very familiar with wiſe men, to meaſure other perſons by the model of their own abilities, and thereby often to ſhoot over the mark, as ſuppoſing men to project to themſelves deeper ends, and to practiſe more ſubtle arts, than ever came into their thoughts; ſo is it a no leſs frequent miſtake with very good men, who meaſure others by the ſtandard of their own uprightneſs, to think of them, and

deal with them, as if they were much more honeſt, than they tru-
are.

There is in good Chriſtians ſo great an hatred of all falſhood and
ſſimulation, that it would not only give a deep wound to their con-
ences, but would even do a violence to their natures, to tell a known
; and thinking others to be fram'd juſt as they are, and to act upon
e ſame principles as they do, they are too liable to be impos'd upon
men of falſe tongues, and deceitful lips. Whatever is barely affirm'd,
by them eaſily credited: what is vouch'd with ſolemn aſſeverations,
ves ſtill leſs room in their breaſts for doubt: what is confirm'd by
ths, and ratified by an appeal to the omniſcience, and an impreca-
n of the vengeance of God, hath with them all the force and credi-
ity of a ſelf-evident and mathematical truth. And as honeſt and ſin-
e Chriſtians are thus apt to lay themſelves open to the practices of
ers, by their too great credulity; ſo alſo are they wont to diſcover
oſe ſecrets of their own hearts, which might with a good conſcience
conceal'd, and which cannot without prejudice be diſclos'd, thro'
ir too great freedom and openneſs. They are ſo much afraid of diſ-
iſing their thoughts by lying and hypocriſy, that they often want that
dent reſervedneſs, which is no ways inconſiſtent with the ſincerity
a down-right honeſt man, or the ſimplicity of a good Chriſtian; they
r teſtimony of themſelves and of their inward ſentiments, even in
ir ordinary converſation, as if they were to give evidence upon their
hs at the bar; and deem it not ſufficient to maintain the character of
ir veracity, that they ſpeak nothing but what is true, unleſs they at
e ſame time ſpeak out all the truth. That *lying lips are an abomina-* Prov. 12. 22.
n to the Lord, is an aphoriſm, which never ſlips out of the thoughts
theſe honeſt and well-meaning perſons: but they are often apt to for-
t that other obſervation of *Solomon*, that *a fool uttereth all his mind*, Prov. 29. 11.
t a wiſe man keepeth it in till afterwards. For want of this pru-
nt reſerve, they heedleſly incur dangers; which, without any pre-
lice to their virtue, they might eſcape, if they would call in the ſuc-
urs of wiſdom to their own neceſſary defence. Where theſe are not
ll'd in, men are apt to avoid one extreme by running into another,
hich, tho' not equally ſinful, may be very hazardous: ſo far are they
om revenging injuries, as to invite them; ſo far from being cruel, as
be tame; ſo far from hating their enemies, as to cheriſh them; ſo
from perſecuting, as not to fence and guard themſelves againſt per-
cution; ſo far from uſing thoſe offenſive weapons of force and oppreſ-
n, which the Goſpel forbids, as not to make uſe of thoſe defenſive
ms of prudence and caution, which the ſoldiers of Chriſt are both al-
w'd and requir'd to be expert in.

When the wiſe man adviſeth us *to ſearch after wiſdom, to put our* Ecclus 6. 24.
et into her fetters, and our neck into her chains; he aſſures us, for our
ncouragement, that *her fetters ſhall be a ſtrong defence for us, and*
r chains a robe of glory. We have ſeen ſome of the miſchiefs which
ppen to virtuous men, thro' want of this defence; and it would not
e difficult to ſhew what farther detriment accrues to virtue it ſelf, from
e lack of this ornament. For when men, thro' a natural diſpoſition
goodneſs, are very honeſt, but, thro' a defect of good underſtanding,
e not equally wiſe; this unguarded ſimplicity is too apt to betray them
to ſome little weakneſſes and indiſcretions, which may caſt a blemiſh
oth on them, and on thoſe virtues which they practiſe, but in an un-

becoming manner, and with an ill grace. And tho' good-nature and Chriſtian charity ſhould over-look a few ſmall faults in thoſe, who are conſpicuous for many eminent virtues; yet, in an ill-natur'd and uncharitable world, the want of diſcretion in good men may chance to caſt a greater blemiſh on Religion, than the honour done it by their virtue and integrity will ever be able to wipe off. Let any one calmly conſider, how contemptible a figure devotion makes, when it degenerates into ſuperſtition; how great miſchief zeal hath done in the world, when it hath wanted the guidance of diſcretion; and how often conſcientious perſons have unwittingly been made the inſtruments of men of no conſcience, to bring about their moſt wicked purpoſes; and he will be convinc'd of the neceſſity of *adding to our virtue knowledge*, and of joining the *wiſdom of the ſerpent to the innocence of the dove*.

THAT prudence, which is by our Saviour preſcrib'd, as the moſt proper preſervative againſt the rage of perſecutors, is more eſpecially neceſſary to guard us of the Reform'd Religion againſt the furious attempts, and ſubtle machinations of our ſworn, inveterate, and implacable enemies of the Church of *Rome*. If the *wiſdom of the ſerpent* was therefore neceſſary to the Apoſtles, becauſe they were *ſent forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves*; it becomes us, who are encompaſs'd with the like adverſaries, and expos'd to the like dangers, to arm our ſelves with the like wearineſs and precaution. We profeſs the ſame pure and undefil'd faith which the Apoſtles preach'd: and as our Reformers took eſpecial care, that our Church ſhould, as to its doctrine, diſcipline and worſhip, be reſtor'd to the ſame ſtate, wherein it was by the Apoſtles at firſt conſtituted; ſo the malice of our enemies hath farther provided, that, as to its being hated alſo and perſecuted, it ſhould be primitive and apoſtolical. I have before obſerv'd, how difficult it is for thoſe, who are endued with the ſimplicity of the dove, to form adequate notions of the exquiſite malignity of which ſome men, and even ſome Chriſtians, are capable. Were a good man, who is unacquainted with the hiſtory of this day's conſpiracy, to ſit down and conſider with himſelf the utmoſt miſchief, that an uncontroll'd malice, aſſiſted with the deepeſt ſubtlety, could poſſibly deviſe; any imaginary ſcheme of wickedneſs, which ſuch a one could with the greateſt ſtretch of invention conceive, would, I am perſwaded, fall much ſhort of the complicated villainy of that helliſh deſign: and altho' we have unqueſtionable evidence of the truth of it; yet ſuch is its blackneſs, and ſo heinous its guilt, that it can ſcarce enter into the heart of a good-natur'd man to believe that to be poſſible, which the notoriety of the fact leaves him no room to doubt of. But tho' ſuch wicked deſigns, before they were diſcover'd, could not have been ſuſpected; yet after repeated deliverances from the attempts of *Rome*, not to be ſuſpicious of danger from the ſame enemies, would not be charity, but folly; not to be awake, and upon our guard againſt thoſe, who have taken ſo much pains to rowſe us out of our ſleep, would be an inſtance of down-right lethargy. It is foretold indeed, that, under the Goſpel-diſpenſation, the *lamb ſhall lie down with the wolf*; but then it is ſuppos'd, that the wolf hath firſt laid aſide his natural fierceneſs, and hath left off *to do hurt, and to deſtroy in God's holy mountain*. But whilſt ſuch ravenous wolves retain their ſavage temper, whilſt there is in them an inſatiable appetite after blood, whilſt their mouths are continually open to devour Chriſt's flock; common prudence will ſuggeſt to us the uſe of all honeſt and lawful means to

Iſai. 11. 11.

keep our ſelves out of their reach; and to preſerve our country from *Papal* tyranny; our laws, our eſtates, our liberties from *Papal* invaſion; our lives from *Papal* perſecution; and our ſouls from *Papal* ſuperſtition and idolatry. God forbid, that we ſhould uſe any inhuman, any unchriſtian methods, even for the compaſſing theſe good ends; or ſhould think all thoſe means warrantable in the ſervice of the beſt cauſe, which our enemies make no ſcruple to uſe for the maintenance of the worſt: far be from us thoſe fraudulent arts, and that ſpirit of perſecution, which we ſo heartily condemn in them. But, if there be any thing laudable in theſe our adverſaries; if any means, by them miſus'd for the ſupport of a falſe Religion, may by us be commendably employ'd for the advancement of the true one; let us not diſdain to be imitators of their wiſdom, whoſe wickedneſs we ſo deſervedly abhor. It would add great ſtrength to our cauſe, if we exerted our ſelves in defence of our eſtabliſh'd Church, with that hearty zeal, that unwearied induſtry, and above all, with that firm union among our ſelves, which we cannot but obſerve, approve, and be afraid of in our enemies. All the jarring parties among the *Romaniſts* cordially agree in promoting the intereſt of their Church. *Franciſcans* and *Dominicans*, *Janſeniſts* and *Jeſuits*, *Seculars* and *Regulars*, lay aſide their mutual quarrels, and join their forces againſt the heretick, as a common adverſary. And tho', notwithſtanding their ſo much boaſted concord, there is, after all, neither unanimity in opinion, nor uniformity of rites in that Church; it muſt be confeſs'd, that there is among them an union of intereſts, which reconciles all differences, and makes them one entire and well-compacted body. Thus when the *Jews* were employ'd in rebuilding the holy city, we read that their adverſaries, however divided among themſelves, were all united in obſtructing that work. *It came to paſs*, ſaith the ſacred Hiſtorian, *that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Aſhdodites, heard that the walls of Jeruſalem were made up, and the breaches began to be ſtopp'd; then they were very wroth, and conſpir'd all of them together, to come and to fight againſt Jeruſalem, and to hinder it.* Nehem. 4. 7, 8.

Against this united ſtrength of our enemies we ſhould be much better able to bear up, if we were as firmly combin'd in the defence of our Religion, as they are in aſſaulting it; if our ſcatter'd forces were brought to a cloſer order for the ſecuring that Church, which is moſt vigorouſly attack'd by the *Papiſts*, as being by them known to be the ſtrongeſt bulwark againſt *Popery*. Wiſe was the obſervation, and wholſom the advice, which *Nehemiah* gave to the nobles, to the rulers, and to the reſt of the people, upon a like occaſion; *the work is great and large, and we are ſeparated upon the wall, one far from another*: *in what place therefore ye hear the ſound of the trumpet, reſort ye thither unto us*: *our God ſhall fight for us.* Nehem. 4. 19, 20. May our nobles, and rulers, and the reſt of our people be thus united in the defence of thoſe ramparts, which the wiſdom of our law-givers hath provided againſt the aſſaults of *Popery*: may this *great and large work* be carry'd on by joint aſſiſtance, and by well-concerted meaſures: may thoſe, who at preſent *are ſeparated too far one from another*, draw nearer together for their common defence: may every one in his place and ſtation diligently labour in this neceſſary work; may *God fight for us*: and, under God, may prudence be unto us as a weapon of defence againſt the treacherous deſigns of our moſt ſubtle, and moſt pernicious enemies!

MANY and great are the miſchiefs, which have been obſerv'd to ariſe from the want of wiſdom in thoſe that are harmleſs: but ſtill theſe are few and inconſiderable, in compariſon of thoſe, which we propos'd to conſider in the

Second PLACE; namely, the miſchiefs that ariſe from the want of innocence in thoſe who are wiſe.

WISDOM is the gift of God; in it ſelf uſeful, and by the author of it conferr'd on us for the nobleſt purpoſes; for the diſcovery of truth, and the detection of error; for the promoting our temporal and our eternal welfare; for procuring to our ſelves and to others all the good things of which our natures are capable, and for averting from our ſelves and others all the evils to which we are liable; for the eſtabliſhment and preſervation of kingdoms and ſtates, by wholſom laws, wiſe counſels, and prudent adminiſtration. But this talent, which is by the author of our nature, and the giver of all grace, beſtow'd upon men for ſuch great and glorious ends, is capable of being perverted, and is, by perſons deſtitute of that innocence, which ought to be the inſeparable companion of wiſdom, often miſus'd to the very worſt of purpoſes; for the diſguiſing of truth, and the palliating of error; for extirpating God's true Religion, and introducing a falſe one; for the fomenting ſchiſms in the Church, and tumults in the ſtate; for diſturbing the peace of the world, and bringing all things into diſorder and confuſion. The peſt and bane of mankind, all the ſins which we commit, and all the evils which we ſuffer, had their firſt ſpring and origine from that Serpent, *which was more ſubtle than all the creatures that the Lord* God *had made*; and by perſons of the ſame ſerpent-like ſubtlety have all the miſchiefs, which have ſince plagued the ſons of *Adam*, been contriv'd and carry'd on. A wiſe and ſober Heathen was wont to pronounce a ſolemn curſe againſt thoſe, who firſt found out the unlucky diſtinction between *Profitable* and *Honeſt*; and ſeveral, who had only the light of reaſon to guide them, have judg'd it extremely ſcandalous, not only to prefer profit to honeſty, but even ſo much as to bring the former into competition with the latter. But ſome perſons, who call themſelves Chriſtians, and ſome, who have appropriated to themſelves the holy name of *Jeſus*, have thought it a plain indication of weakneſs and folly to forego any thing which is greatly profitable, becauſe it is a little diſhoneſt; and have laugh'd at the idle ſcruples of thoſe, who have given themſelves the trouble to enquire, whether an action be lawful or not, after it hath once appear'd expedient.

THAT it is unlawful for us to do evil that good may come; that we ſhould be ſtrictly careful, not only that the cauſe we are engag'd in be juſt, but that the methods, whereby we promote it, be alſo warrantable; that we ſhould chuſe rather to ſuffer the greateſt injury, than to do the leaſt; that to deprive another of his juſt right, and to promote our own gain by our neighbour's loſs, is a more intolerable evil than pain, than poverty, than death; that we ought inviolably to do the thing which is right, and to ſpeak the truth from our heart; that he who ſweareth to his neighbour ſhould not diſappoint him, tho' it were to his own hurt; that the publick weal is always to be preferr'd to our private intereſt; and that every good man ſhould be ready to ſacrifice his eaſe, his fortunes, his life, for the benefit of his country; are the principles of undeprav'd reaſon, and of our moſt holy Religion. But thoſe perſons, in whom the wiſdom of the ſerpent is ſo far predominant,

as

to leave no room for the innocence of the dove, finding that ſuch ma-
ims as theſe cramp them in the purſuit of their worldly aims, take care
ſhake off theſe cumberſome notions; and in their ſtead take up a ſet
principles, which, tho' they are not ſo well calculated for the good
ſociety, are more convenient for private uſe. That the ſhorteſt ways
an end are fitteſt to be choſen, be they never ſo foul; that the ap-
arance of virtue is an advantage, but the practice of it a burden; that
arity ought to begin at home, and to end there too, are maxims,
hich, tho' own'd by few, are by many made the meaſures of their
tions.

Now, what limits, what ſtop can be put to the hurt that may be
ne by perſons, who have once ſtrongly imbib'd theſe notions? By per-
ns, who have policy enough to contrive, cunning enough to diſſem-
e, inſinuation enough to perſwade, dexterity enough to execute, any
iſchief; and have no ſenſe of common honeſty to reſtrain them, no
inciples of ſound religion to controll them; or, which is worſt of all,
e, by the prejudices of a falſe religion, encourag'd and puſh'd on to
rpetrate the greateſt villainies? The wiſdom of ſuch men muſt be the
ry reverſe of *that wiſdom, which is from above*; it is neither *pure*,
r *peaceable*; neither *gentle*, nor *eaſy to be entreated*; it is void *of*
ercy, and of good fruits; partial and hypocritical: in ſhort, it is from
low, from the old Serpent; and wherever it is found, *there is con-*
ion, and every evil work. From a wiſdom thus Anti-Chriſtian, thus
ſual, thus deviliſh, there muſt of courſe iſſue forth miſchiefs too many
be numbered, and the leſs neceſſary to be farther inſiſted on in gene-
; becauſe no general diſcourſe can give us ſo juſt and lively an image
the wiſdom of the ſerpent abſtracted from the ſimplicity of the dove,
we may form to our ſelves by reflecting on the wily conduct, the ſub-
intrigues, and the refin'd policy, of the Church of *Rome*.

The intereſt and grandeur of the holy Church is the end, which all
that communion conſtantly, ſteadily, and regularly purſue. All their
w doctrines are ſo modell'd, all their diſcipline ſo form'd, and all their
ſigns ſo laid, as jointly to promote this one end. All means are judg'd,
t only fit or unfit, but even lawful or unlawful, according to their ex-
diency or inexpediency for the compaſſing this end. This is always
permoſt in their view, always firſt in their intention; and ſuch in-
ntion ſanctifies all methods, that may any ways contribute to the ac-
mpliſhment of it. Treachery, and violence; breach of promiſes, and
oaths; privy conſpiracies, and open rebellions; the aſſaſſination of
inces, and the maſſacre of their ſubjects; the exciſion of a royal fa-
ily, with all its branches; the mingling of King, Nobles, and Com-
ons, in one general ſlaughter; the cutting off a whole nation, both
to its preſent ſupport, and as to its future hopes, by one compen-
ous blow; the deſtruction, not only of the bodies, but even of the ſouls
obſtinate hereticks, dying, according to theſe mens uncharitable opi-
on, out of the pale of the Church, and without the means of ſalva-
on, are all deem'd, not only innocent and allowable, but even com-
endable and meritorious; are juſtified by their ableſt caſuiſts in their
ritings; are encourag'd by the directors of conſciences in private con-
ſſions; are recommended to the furtherance of God's bleſſing by prayers,
ſacraments, and maſſes; are celebrated with applauſe in the holy
nclave; are ratified by the ſovereign authority of their infallible Judge;
d entitle thoſe, who are engag'd in them, to ſaintſhip, to hymns, to

incenſe, and to religious worſhip, as often as they are perform'd with a good intention, and deſign'd for the maintenance and propagation of the catholick cauſe.

HEATHEN *Rome*, as ambitious as it was of dominion, ſcorn'd to advance it ſelf by ſuch diſhoneſt methods, as Chriſtian *Rome* is not aſham'd to uſe for the eſtabliſhment of its univerſal empire. A *Roman* Conſul, when an overture hath been made him by the ſubject of a powerful enemy to diſpatch his own prince, and thereby to put an end to a dangerous war, hath generouſly rejected the propoſal, and ſent the traitor back to his maſter, to be puniſh'd for his treachery. But can Chriſtian *Rome* furniſh us with ſuch an inſtance of moral honeſty? Would ſuch a generous refuſal of a mighty advantage to the Church of *Rome* meet with as much applauſe now in a conſiſtory of Cardinals, as that formerly did in the *Roman* Senate? Would the Holy Father reject an offer, which promis'd the extirpation of hereſie, and the eſtabliſhment of the catholick religion, becauſe it could not be made good, without the commiſſion of treaſon? Would he ſend back, would he puniſh, would he diſcover, would he diſcourage the traitor? Nay, have we not reaſon to judge, from the hiſtory of this day's conſpiracy, that tho' the ancient *Romans* were ſo ſcrupulous as to refuſe an advantage, which could not be compaſs'd with honeſty; yet, according to the caſuiſtical divinity of the modern *Romaniſts*, nothing is diſhonourable, nothing diſhoneſt, which may ſerve to promote the catholick intereſt? Such practices, and ſuch principles, ſhew our adverſaries to have a plentiful ſhare of the wiſdom of the ſerpent, but to be wholly deſtitute of the innocence of the dove. Paſs we on therefore from men of this infamous character, and proceed we, in the

Third PLACE, to take a view of thoſe mighty advantages, which reſult from our being at the ſame time both wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves.

PERFECT wiſdom, and perfect holineſs are the incommunicable attributes of God Almighty; and as far as men take care to excel in theſe divine qualities, ſo far do they approach towards the unattainable perfections of the God-head. Hence it is, that the wiſe man, when he would give us a lofty and becoming idea of God, cloaths him with the ſame armour, which our Saviour hath here in the text provided for the Wiſd. 15. 18, 19. good Chriſtian. *He ſhall put on righteouſneſs*, ſaith he, *as a breaſt-plate, and true judgment inſtead of an helmet. He ſhall take holineſs for an invincible ſhield.* The immaculate purity of God makes him utterly deteſt all manner of iniquity; the infinity of his wiſdom places him without the reach of any ſort of calamity. Such a degree of unſullied holineſs is too high for frail man, *he cannot attain unto it*; ſuch a ſtate of uninterrupted bliſs is unſuitable to the condition of poor mortals, they muſt not hope, on this ſide the grave, to be poſſeſs'd of it: But as far as human nature can go, ſo far will wiſdom and innocence carry men: integrity will make them ſtrictly careful to do nothing which is ſinful; and prudence will guard them againſt all miſchiefs, that are fairly avoidable. Such is the ſteadineſs of their virtue, ſuch ſtrong hold hath Religion got of their ſouls and conſciences, that no proſpect of temporal advantage can allure them, no appearance of danger can deter them from their duty: and, on the other ſide, ſuch is the ſoundneſs of their judgment, that they will not lightly forego any intereſt, which they might preſerve with a good conſcience; or heedleſsly run into any

danger,

anger, which they might eſcape without forfeiting their integrity. Their oneſty will not ſuffer them to do wrong, tho' an opportunity ſhould ffer it ſelf of doing it with ſecrecy and impunity; and their prudence vill ſecure them from being over-reach'd by the fraud of crafty and treach-rous perſons, *who lie in wait to deceive*. They are too generous to im-oſe upon others, and too cautious to be impos'd upon: their ſincerity ever allows them, upon any occaſion, to fly to the ſordid arts of lying nd diſſimulation; and their diſcretion puts a bridle into their mouths, as that they do not ſuffer thoſe truths to eſcape their lips, which it is dviſable to conceal.

The Chriſtian religion has taught them to *love their enemies, to do ood to thoſe which hate them, and to pray for thoſe which deſpitefully ſe and perſecute them*: but prudence directs them to be aware of their nemies; to be upon their guard againſt the malicious deſigns of thoſe, hich hate them; and to uſe all honeſt and lawful means of ſecuring hemſelves from deſpiteful uſage and perſecution. The goodneſs of their ature, and the charitableneſs of their Chriſtian temper, will not permit hem to entertain evil ſurmiſes, vain ſuſpicions, and groundleſs jealou-es. They have not ſo bad an opinion of human nature, as to think all erſons inclin'd to do them wrong, who are able to do it; to look up-n themſelves as unſafe, whilſt it is in the power of their neighbours to urt them; and to eſteem it a neceſſary part of precaution to invade the ghts of others, for fear that others may invade theirs. But, where ey have been taught by long experience, that the power and inclina-on to do miſchief go hand in hand together; where the ſenſe of what ey have already felt from an avow'd enemy, leaves no room for cha-ty to hope for a kinder treatment; where they find their adverſaries aſping after an increaſe of power, with a manifeſt intention of em-loying it to their ruin; there wiſdom awakens their vigilance, and ſets hem upon their guard, to do every thing which religion allows, and rudence preſcribes, for their own preſervation.

The integrity of ſuch men will not ſuffer them to do any thing, which eir conſciences tell them is ſinful; and their diſcretion will inſtruct them, ow to fence their innocent and laudable actions againſt the danger of be-g miſtaken by the ignorant, or miſrepreſented by the malicious. A ue ſenſe of religion, and an awful fear of God, is the firſt and governing rinciple, which influences all their thoughts, and words, and actions, nd makes them rigorouſly careful to do nothing, which may offend him, *ho ſees the inmoſt ſecrets of their hearts*: and, when they have thus ken care to approve themſelves in the ſight of God, their wiſdom doth rther direct them to place their virtues in ſuch an advantageous light, s may beſt cover them from the calumnies of their adverſaries; ſo that *heir good may not be evil-ſpoken of.*

Wisdom, tho' not neceſſary in the ſame degree with honeſty; yet, when joyn'd with it, is of marvellous uſe to give a due luſtre to virtue, and o ſet it out to the beſt advantage. That good actions may not want the tmoſt beauty they are capable of, nor fail to gain the praiſe and admira-ion of all who obſerve them, thoſe Chriſtians who are eminently wiſe as well as virtuous, do always take ſtrict care, that their actions be, not only as o the ſubſtance and matter of them, agreeable to the laws of God, but more-over, that, as to the very manner of their performance, they be ſo done, s to appear graceful and amiable in the ſight of men. In order to this, ſuch good and wiſe perſons are always careful to obſerve that decency, which thoſe who have beſt underſtood it, have been more able to exemplifie by ſpecial inſtances, than to deſcribe in general; which is the higheſt perfection of every art, and yet can be taught by none; which, whereever it is found, doth, by a ſecret and irreſiſtible force, move our admiration, tho' we cannot diſtinctly aſſign what it is we ſo readily applaud; which pleaſeth the niceſt judges, and at the ſame time takes equally with the unskilful; which, in a word, all men agree to extol wherever it doth appear, but which only perſons of great prudence, as well as unqueſtionable integrity are able to ſhew forth in all their actions. Theſe have an accurate diſcernment of what is, upon every occaſion, fit and agreeable: theſe know exactly how to make a judicious choice of that, which is not only ſuitable to the laws of reaſon, as they are men, and to the holineſs of their profeſſion, as they are Chriſtians; but is alſo agreeable to their particular condition, and to that peculiar ſtation, which they are to adorn: theſe can adapt themſelves aright to all circumſtances, and fit every thing they do to its peculiar time and place: theſe are acquainted with the temper, ſentiments, and intereſt of thoſe, with whom they are converſant; and foreſeeing what is moſt likely to gain their good eſteem, can take care ſo to demean themſelves, as may beſt procure it: theſe have carefully obſerv'd what it is, which uſually leſſens the credit of good actions, and therefore are prepar'd to uſe all diligence to avoid the like occaſions of offence.

THESE are the perſons, who, by their excelling in wiſdom as well as virtue, do honour to the religion which they profeſs: theſe are they, who muſt retrieve its reputation in a looſe and profligate age. We live amongſt men, who will not give themſelves the trouble to examine the grounds of our holy faith, but reject it in the groſs, and condemn it without trial. If they can diſcover any the leaſt failing, or if they can pitch upon any indiſcreet action, in thoſe who pretend to believe the Goſpel, and to act by its rules; this they greedily lay hold of as a juſt prejudice againſt religion it ſelf. And if we appeal from the vices and follies of the Chriſtians of our own age, to the exemplary virtue and ſingular wiſdom of thoſe who firſt preach'd and embrac'd it, ſuch men are ready to call in queſtion the truth of thoſe pretended originals, of which they can ſee no copies: but if we can point out unto them men, who prove the ſincerity of their faith by the holineſs of their lives; whoſe actions are agreeable to their principles, and who are as conſpicuous for their wiſdom as for their integrity; whoſe ſober converſation and manners will bear the moſt rigorous teſt; and in whom the moſt malicious wit can find no weakneſs and indiſcretion to expoſe and ridicule; then the mouth of profaneneſs is preſently ſtopp'd; the infidel is convinc'd and ſilenc'd, and having nothing to object to the religious and wiſe conduct of ſuch men, is forc'd to confeſs, that *God is in them of a truth.*

AND as it is from perſons of this character alone, that we can hope for a reparation to the honour of our holy religion; ſo it is from perſons endow'd with the ſame qualifications of integrity and wiſdom, that a divided church, and a diſtracted nation muſt hope for a healing of their wounds, and the reſtoring of their breaches. For next to the grace of God, which inſpires men with an hearty deſire of concord, and to the guidance of his Holy Spirit, which directs them in the purſuit of *ſuch things as make for peace,* no means are more likely to put an end to our differences, and to reconcile the minds of fellow-citizens, and fellow-chriſtians, unhappily tearing one another to pieces, and ripping up

the

e very bowels of their common parent by their mutual diſſenſions, than
e honeſt endeavours and ſage counſels of ſuch illuſtrious worthies, on
hoſe integrity all men can ſafely rely, that they will not willingly be-
ay the publick intereſt; and on whoſe prudence all men can entirely
pend, that they will not, thro' ignorance, miſtake it.

FROM perſons thus qualified we may promiſe our ſelves the ſtrongeſt
ccours againſt the open aſſaults, and ſecret attempts, of the Church of
ome. Their ſagacity will penetrate into the moſt intricate deſigns of
piſh treachery; and their integrity will ſtand firm againſt the bold en-
oachments of *Papal* uſurpation. They are too honeſt to be brib'd out
their Religion by the proſpect of intereſt; and they are too wiſe to be
eated out of it by the deluſions of ſophiſtry. They were perſons of
is character, who, when in a late reign *Popery*, like an inundation,
as breaking in upon us, bravely ſtood in the gap, and reſiſted the tor-
nt: and perſons of this character will always go on ſteadily and con-
ientiouſly to oppoſe *Popery*, tho' they ſhould be traduc'd as favour-
s of it, by thoſe very men, who, in that day of our diſtreſs, were buſie
breaking down thoſe fences, by which alone it was to be kept out.
he craft of *Popiſh* emiſſaries void of all honeſty may ſuggeſt, and ſome
ell-meaning, but miſtaken *Proteſtants* may poſſibly entertain, fears
danger from the pretended *Popery* of the Church of *England*: but
ch jealouſies will never prevail with perſons, who are wiſe as well as
oneſt, to do any thing for the weakening of that eſtabliſhment, which,
der God, is our beſt ſecurity againſt the real *Popery* of the Church
Rome.

THE courage of ſuch men will vigorouſly oppoſe our cruel enemies,
hen they appear in their own proper form of ravenous and devouring
olves; and their caution will deſcry them, when, for the deluding of
nwary ſouls, they put on ſheep's-cloathing. Honeſt and wiſe men are
ither to be frighted by thoſe anathema's, which our adverſaries thun-
r out againſt hereſie in their general councils; nor to be caught by
e crafty wilineſs of theſe impoſtors, when, under a falſe diſguiſe, they
il againſt forms of prayer, againſt ſuperſtitious rites, and againſt Anti-
riſt, as from unqueſtionable authority we know they have ſometimes
one, in the ſeparate aſſemblies of deluded ſectaries. Whether theſe ene-
ies of our conſtitution would overthrow it by laying gun-powder un-
r our houſes of parliament, or by ſcattering the ſeeds of diviſion a-
ongſt us; we may hope, that their wicked purpoſes will ſtill be de-
ated by perſons always vigilant, always zealous for preſerving our
tabliſh'd Church and government. Men of prudence cannot but be
areful to prevent the growth of that power, which threatens ruin to
l their civil intereſts; men of conſcience will never fail to oppoſe that
eligion, which is deſtructive of their ſpiritual welfare. Perſons of ap-
rov'd integrity will faithfully maintain the good laws already made for
xcluding ſuch from the ſupreme government of our Church, who are
y principle engag'd to deſtroy it; and perſons of ſingular wiſdom will
nd out ſuch expedients, as may be ſtill neceſſary for our farther ſe-
urity. No human methods, that can be lawfully us'd in order to our
reſervation, will eſcape the ſagacity of ſuch men; and whilſt they take
are to adorn the holineſs of their profeſſion by the ſanctity of their
ives; whilſt their manners are reform'd as well as their faith, we may
ope, that the bleſſing of God will go along with their honeſt endea-
vours.

GREAT bleſſings might a Nation expect, great ſupport might be given to our eſtabliſh'd Church, great honour might redound to our holy Religion, even from a few perſons eminent for theſe qualifications; men of warm hearts, and cool heads; zealous, but with diſcretion; honeſt, but not weak; wiſe, but not crafty; in ſhort, ſtrict obſervers of this divine precept of our bleſſed Lord, and genuine diſciples of him, in whom *were hidden all the treaſures of wiſdom*; *who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth.*

To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, three perſons, and one God, be all honour, glory, dominion, and power, both now and for evermore.

SERMON XXXIX.

Saint Paul's Epiſtle to Philemon explain'd.

PHILEMON. Verſ. 10.

beſeech thee for my Son Oneſimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.

THIS Epiſtle of St. *Paul* hath by ſome been thought fit to be ſhut out of the Canon of Holy Writ, as not worthy to be numbred with the other parts of Scripture, becauſe written to a private perſon, upon a private occaſion; and no ways, as is pretended, conducing to our ſpi- tual edification. But as from the firſt ſettling of the Canon, this Let- r always had a place in it; ſo it will appear, upon examination, high- to deſerve it, both upon account of the exquiſite art with which it is rote, and moreover of the excellent uſes which may be drawn from , for the direction of our practice. The ſubſtance of the whole is con- in'd in that verſe, which I have pitch'd upon for my text; for the hole Epiſtle is nothing elſe but an earneſt recommendation of *One- ſimus*, whom St. *Paul* had in his impriſonment converted to the Chri- ian faith, to the favour of *Philemon*, whoſe ſervant he had been, and om whoſe ſervice he had fled. All the parts of the Epiſtle are pointed owards this requeſt, as to a common centre, in which they all end; nd there is ſcarce a word in it, which is not of wonderful force to re- ommend this ſuit. I dare be bold to ſay, that there is not extant in l the monuments of ancient and modern oratory a more perfect pat- ern of perſwaſive eloquence, than in this one ſhort Epiſtle of St. *Paul*. o juſtifie this character, I ſhall beg your patience and attention, whilſt go thro' the ſeveral parts of it; and after I have in ſome meaſure let ou into the exquiſite contrivance of it, ſhall afterwards raiſe ſome ractical inferences from it for your edification and uſe.

BEGIN we then where the Apoſtle doth: *Paul a priſoner of Jeſus hriſt, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and ellow-labourer.* The very title, which St. *Paul* here gives to himſelf V. 1.

in the entrance of the Epiſtle, is a moving argument, why he, to whom he writes, ſhould grant the requeſt, which was made to him. If *Paul* was a *priſoner of Jeſus Chriſt*, it would be difficult for one, who profeſs'd himſelf a Diſciple of Chriſt, to deny a favour to him, who was then actually a confeſſor for the Chriſtian Religion. When St. *Paul* ſtyles himſelf *a priſoner of Jeſus Chriſt*, he doth in effect ſay; "By theſe "bonds I beſeech thee to yield to my ſuit; it will be a great eaſe to "me under my preſent ſufferings, to obtain what I ask; it will add "much to the weight of what I now endure, to meet with a denial; I "might uſe the authority of an Apoſtle, and challenge obedience from "thee by virtue of my office; but I chooſe rather to addreſs my ſelf to "thee, as a ſupplicant; and if thou haſt any pity for my ſufferings, any "compaſſion for *Paul the priſoner of Jeſus Chriſt*, thou wilt expreſs it "by thy compliance with my humble and earneſt requeſt." Such an intimation as this muſt needs go a great way towards prevailing with *Philemon*; but leſt the Apoſtle's own intereſt ſhould not be ſtrong enough, he makes uſe of the name of *Timothy* as a fellow-ſupplicant, who join'd with him in the ſame ſuit; and who, together with him, would be oblig'd by the grant, or diſoblig'd by the refuſal of it.

TIMOTHY was a common friend, a friend of *Paul*, and a friend of *Philemon*; for which reaſon the Apoſtle calls him *our brother*. If there had been no other tie between *Paul* and *Philemon*, yet there was this bond of amity between them, that they both agreed in loving, and in being belov'd by, *Timothy* their common brother: a ſuit therefore, which was ſeconded by ſo powerful an intereſt, could not but hope for a favourable reception.

THUS doth the Apoſtle, with great art, enforce his plea in regard of the perſon, or rather perſons, who made it; he gives it ſtill farther weight, and puſhes it on with ſtill greater force, from the conſideration of the perſon, to whom it was made. He addreſſes himſelf unto *Philemon*, as *his dearly beloved, and fellow-labourer*. Now if he was ſo *dearly beloved* by *Paul*, he could not but love one, by whom he was ſo much belov'd; and if he had that love for *Paul*, which *Paul*'s love for him challeng'd as a ſuitable return of gratitude, he would give him a teſtimony of his affection by gratifying him in his requeſt. It was a great honour to *Philemon* to be belov'd by ſo eminent an Apoſtle as St. *Paul*; it was a ſtill greater honour to be numbred amongſt his deareſt and moſt affectionately beloved friends: he could not doubt of the ſincerity of St. *Paul*, when he made theſe large profeſſions of love and kindneſs to him: it was not agreeable with the character of the Apoſtle to uſe theſe expreſſions, as empty forms, words of courſe, and idle compliments; but they came from his heart, as well as from his pen. *Philemon* had found real and undoubted proofs of St. *Paul*'s love to him, in the pains he had taken in his converſion to Chriſt: he had receiv'd from him the greateſt inſtances of kindneſs that one man could receive from another; he had been *turn'd* by him *from darkneſs unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God*, and ow'd to him the means of grace, and the hopes of glory: if therefore he had any ſenſe of gratitude, any ſparks of generoſity in him, he muſt be very deſirous to find out ſome opportunity of making his acknowledgments to one, to whom he was ſo deeply indebted; he could not but with great greedineſs embrace an opportunity which was put into his hands of obliging one, to whom he was ſo highly oblig'd. He could now no longer be at a loſs, how he

might

ight in ſome meaſure requite St. *Paul* for the great and ineſtimable enefits he had receiv'd from him; ſince he could not doubt, but what as ſo earneſtly ask'd by the Apoſtle, would be in a peculiar manner cceptable to him.

And as the Apoſtle thus ſtrongly enforces his requeſt, by applying *Philemon* as *his dearly beloved*; ſo doth he give it yet farther ad- ntage, by addreſſing to him under the notion of *his fellow-labourer*. or if *Philemon* was an aſſiſtant of St. *Paul* in miniſtring unto him in e execution of his Apoſtolical office, he would not complain of the ſence of *Oneſimus*, who did in his place and ſtead miniſter to the poſtle: he would be pleas'd that he tarried with St. *Paul* to ſupply s abſence, and to do his work: he would not think himſelf depriv'd the ſervice of *Oneſimus*, whilſt he was employ'd in that work, in hich he himſelf was a labourer; this his ſervant would be even then ok'd upon as doing his maſter's buſineſs, whilſt he was ſubſervient to e Apoſtle, whoſe miniſter his maſter was.

The Apoſtle having in ſo proper a manner applied himſelf directly *Philemon*, doth in the next place make his addreſſes *to his beloved Ap-* v. 2. *ia*, to *Archippus* his *fellow-ſouldier, and to the Church in Philemon's uſe.* By joyning all theſe in the inſcription of his Letter, he inte- ſts them all in the requeſt which it convey'd; *the beloved Apphia*, who ſuppos'd to be the wife of *Philemon*, would intercede with her huſ- nd in the Apoſtle's behalf; *Archippus*, who was the *Apoſtle's fellow- ldier*, would help him to gain this conqueſt alſo, in which he was deſirous to prevail; *the Church*, or Chriſtians, in *Philemon's houſe*, ould be very proper advocates for *Oneſimus*, who was lately one of e ſame family; and now, by his converſion to the Chriſtian faith, s become a member of the ſame Church.

The Apoſtle, having thus dextrouſly inſcrib'd his Letter, doth in e next place pour forth upon them, to whom he directed it, his Apo- lical benediction; *Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and* v. 3. *Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* By grace is meant the pardon of our ſins; and w could *Philemon* better entitle himſelf to the forgiveneſs of thoſe treſ- ſſes, which he had committed againſt God, than by forgiving thoſe ults, which *Oneſimus* had committed againſt him? He, who was a ſciple and proſelyte of St. *Paul's*, could not but be well-acquainted th the terms and conditions of Goſpel-grace; he could not be a ſtran- r to that expreſs declaration of Chriſt, that *if we forgive men their* Mat. 6. 14. *ſpaſſes, our heavenly Father will alſo forgive us; but if we forgive men their treſpaſſes, neither will our Father forgive us our treſ- ſſes.* When therefore the Apoſtle wiſhes to *Philemon grace from Father*, he wiſhes it upon the Father's terms; and it was in *Phile- n's* breaſt, by his kindneſs or ſeverity towards *Oneſimus*, to render s wiſh either valid, or ineffectual. If he ſhew'd mercy to his offend- ſervant, he might expect grace from an offended God; if he was lling to be reconcil'd to *Oneſimus*, whoſe Lord he was, he might en hope for reconciliation and *peace from his Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* He d himſelf a gracious and merciful Lord; *Oneſimus* could not be a ore unprofitable ſervant to him, than he had been to his Lord: he d found peace and favour with this his Lord, notwithſtanding all his ſt diſobedience; he ought not therefore to be too rigorous in puniſh- g the faults of his ſervant; and tho' he had been guilty of ſome miſ- meanours, yet, upon his amendment, he ought not to ſhew himſelf uel and inexorable.

One would be apt to think, that the Apoſtle had by this time ſufficiently made way for opening his ſuit to *Philemon*; but before he ventures to break it plainly and directly to him, he goes on to ſoften and
v. 4, 5. prepare him ſtill farther for it. *I thank my God*, ſaith he, *making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith, which thou haſt toward the Lord Jeſus, and toward all Saints*. St. *Paul* was a conſtant and unwearied ſupplicant for *Philemon*, making mention of him always in his prayers; he was now become an humble and earneſt ſupplicant to him: the prayers which he had made for him had been graciouſly heard; and it would be an unſuitable return for thoſe good and pious offices, if the prayer which he now made to him ſhould not be granted: as he had pray'd to God in his behalf, ſo alſo had he thank'd God for his love and faith, of which he had heard. Very eminent and remarkable muſt thoſe graces be, the fame of which had reach'd from *Phrygia*, the country where *Philemon* dwelt, to *Rome* the place of St. *Paul's* reſidence, where he wrote, and from whence he dates this Letter. This love of *Philemon* had, it ſeems, extended to *all Saints*, or believers, and therefore could not but reach to *Oneſimus* alſo; ſince he alſo was now entred into the number of the faithful. As the Apoſtle prais'd God daily for the faith and charity of *Philemon*, ſo did he alſo
v. 6. pray unto him for their encreaſe; *that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing, which is in you in Chriſt Jeſus*; that is, that the communication of his charity, which ſprung from his active and lively faith, might be manifeſt and conſpicuous to all men; ſo that all ſhould acknowledge, and, among the reſt, *Oneſimus* ſhould from his own experience celebrate, that goodneſs and charity, which were in him, and for which he was ſo eminent in Chriſt Jeſus, or as it ſhould be rendred, to, that is, to the glory of Chriſt Jeſus; for to him is referr'd all *the good we do to men, and eſpecially to thoſe, who are of the houſhold of faith*. If therefore *Philemon* ſhould, at the interceſſion of *Paul*, receive *Oneſimus*, he would do a good office, not only to his ſervant whom he receiv'd, not only to the Apoſtle at whoſe entreaty he receiv'd him, but even to our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, inaſmuch as he eſteems *what is done unto one of the leaſt of his brethren, as done unto himſelf*.

The Apoſtle having thus intimated to *Philemon*, that his charity was capable of being farther diſplay'd, reſumes the commendation of him, on account of thoſe extraordinary acts of charity, which had given
v. 7. ſo great a luſtre to his character: *We have great joy and conſolation in thy love, becauſe the bowels of the Saints are refreſhed by thee, brother*. How high a commendation is this of *Philemon*'s bounty, that it afforded joy, not only to thoſe who were releiv'd by it, but alſo to the Apoſtle who heard of it; that not only the indigent were ſupported by it in their neceſſities, but St. *Paul* alſo comforted by it in his impriſonment; that the tidings of it were ſo welcome to the Apoſtle, that they made his chains ſit eaſier upon him, and gave him conſolation in his diſtreſs; that as *the bowels of the Saints were refreſh'd*, ſo alſo the ſpirits of the Apoſtle were reviv'd, by the diffuſive charity of this his proſelyte, whom he might ſtyle his ſon, as *having begotten him in Chriſt Jeſus thro' the Goſpel*, but whom he here ſtyles his brother, that he might not ſeem to affect a ſuperiority over him, but might place himſelf on the ſame level with him. How apt an introduction is this applauſe, given by St. *Paul* to *Philemon*, to that requeſt, which he was now to uſher

in

? Had he been ſo univerſally kind to all the faithful, and would not
e ſame good diſpoſition incline him to be kind to St. *Paul*? Had he by
s charity towards the Saints gained ſo great a reputation, and would
forfeit this character by an unkind repulſe of the Apoſtle's requeſt?
ad the Apoſtle found ſo much joy and conſolation from the report of
s charity towards thoſe, who were ſtrangers to St. *Paul*, and would
not contribute to his pleaſure and comfort, by being merciful and
nd to *Oneſimus*, for whom the Apoſtle was ſo nearly and affectionately
ncern'd.

THE Apoſtle having, in ſo artful and elegant a manner, prepar'd the
ind of *Philemon* for a favourable audience of his ſuit, doth at laſt in
moſt tender, and pathetick, and winning ſtrain open it to him:
herefore, tho' I might be much bold in Chriſt, to enjoyn thee that v. 8, 9, 10.
hich is convenient; *yet for love's ſake I rather beſeech thee, being ſuch*
one as Paul the aged, and now alſo a priſoner of Jeſus Chriſt; *I be-*
ech thee for my ſon Oneſimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.
is obſervable, that even here, where the Apoſtle makes known his
queſt, he ſtill, as long as ever it is poſſible, forbears the expreſs men-
n of it: he ſtill goes on to ſooth and ſoften him, before he ventures
name *Oneſimus* to him. What he had in the beginning of his Let-
barely hinted, in chuſing to ſtyle himſelf rather a priſoner, than an
oſtle of Chriſt, that he now more fully and directly inſiſts upon, to
t, that he might by his authority command, what he choſe rather
beſeech. By the power delegated to him from Chriſt, he might *en-*
n that which was convenient; and *Philemon* could not diſobey ſuch
injunction, without rejecting the authority of Chriſt in the perſon of
s Apoſtle, who was commiſſion'd by him: but St. *Paul* doth as it
ere diveſt himſelf of the dignity of his character, and aſſume the mein
d garb of an humble petitioner.

HOWEVER, this was a ſufficient hint to *Philemon*, that he ought to
ve a regard to the Apoſtolical character, tho' St. *Paul* did not inſiſt
on it; for St. *Paul* was not leſs an Apoſtle, becauſe he was pleas'd
wave his privilege; *Philemon* ought not to forget his dignity, tho'
. *Paul* did not challenge obedience by virtue of it; that requeſt, which
me from one who had a power to command, ought to be as preva-
nt, as readily and cheerfully comply'd with, as if it had been deliver'd
the form, and with the air, of a down-right command. Age and gray-
irs, wherever they are found, create reverence; ſufferings and calami-
es beſpeak compaſſion: what therefore *Paul the aged*, what *Paul the*
iſoner of Jeſus Chriſt implores, could not be refus'd: what ſuch an
e beſeeches, what he doth not once only aſk, but, by reiterating his
ayer, to ſhew his eagerneſs and vehemence, doth again beſeech; what
e entreats *for love's ſake*, for the ſake of that love, which he had al-
ays ſhew'd to *Philemon*, and for the ſake of that love, which *Phile-*
on ow'd to him; what he as a friend aſk'd of a friend for a friend;
hat he as a ſpiritual father aſk'd of his ſon *Philemon* for his ſon *One-*
imus; what he aſk'd for a ſon of his love, a ſon in a peculiar manner
ndear'd to him, becauſe he had begotten him in his bonds; what, I
y, was aſk'd by the Apoſtle in ſuch engaging, ſuch alluring, ſuch melt-
g rhetorick, could not but prevail.

BUT ſtill, leſt the mention of *Oneſimus*'s name, which the Apoſtle
ad ſo long declin'd, and which he had at laſt ſo tenderly brought in,
ight revive in *Philemon*'s mind the memory of thoſe injuries, which

this his ſervant had done him, and thereby exaſperate his ſpirit, St. *Paul* takes care immediately to ſoften his reſentments by an acknowledgment of *Oneſimus*'s paſt faults, and an aſſurance of his reformation and amendment: v. 11. *Who in time paſt was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me. Oneſimus* was now become a Chriſtian; and he, who is ſincerely ſuch, is good in all relations: he had before been unprofitable to his maſter, which is a ſofter word for his having been unfaithful and injurious to him. Thoſe who intercede for others uſe to mitigate their faults by the gentleneſs of their expreſſions: *Oneſimus* had really run away from his maſter and robb'd him; it would have ſounded harſh in St. *Paul* to have call'd one, for whom he was pleading, a fugitive and thief, and he might by ſuch language have ſowr'd *Philemon*, inſtead of appeaſing him: he couches therefore his fault, which was not to be denied, under the milder term of his having been unſerviceable. But whatever damages he had before done to his maſter, he would now be an uſeful ſervant; he would anſwer the name, by which he was call'd; as was his name *Oneſimus*, which in the original ſignifies uſeful, ſo would he approve himſelf by his future ſervices; he would be uſeful both to *Philemon* and to *Paul*, and therefore doubly uſeful to *Philemon*, both as he ſerv'd him, and as he ſerv'd for him, by ſerving the Apoſtle, whom it was *Philemon*'s duty to ſerve.

THAT *Philemon* might be ſatisfied of the reformation of *Oneſimus*, not only from St. *Paul*'s teſtimony, but alſo from his own experience, the Apoſtle tells him in the next verſe, that he had remitted him to him: v. 12. *Whom I have ſent again; thou therefore receive him, who is mine own bowels.* Whilſt *Oneſimus* abſented himſelf from his maſter, he ſtill continued in his delinquency; St. *Paul* therefore ſends him back again, that *Philemon* might have no reaſon to be angry at his longer detainour. He might have inſiſted on his granting a pardon, before he ſuffer'd *Oneſimus* to go to him; but he chooſes rather to truſt to his generoſity, than to make terms with him: *Oneſimus* might the better hope for favour, becauſe at the perſwaſion of St. *Paul* he voluntarily ſurrendred himſelf; and becauſe the Apoſtle did not capitulate with *Philemon*, but gave up his ſervant, to be us'd by him at his diſcretion: he could not be ſo diſingenuous, as to uſe him ill; he could not but give him a kind reception, if not on his own account, yet for St. *Paul*'s ſake, who lov'd him ſo tenderly, to whom he was as *his own bowels*; ſo that he was his other ſelf; and what treatment he found, whether gentle or ſevere, would touch the ſoul of St. *Paul* himſelf.

THAT the Apoſtle might the more powerfully recommend *Oneſimus* to kind treatment, he goes on to ſhew *Philemon*, that it was in his power to have kept him in his own ſervice, without asking his conſent: v. 13, 14. *Whom I would have retain'd with me, that in thy ſtead he might have miniſtred unto me in the bonds of the Goſpel; but without thy mind would I do nothing, that thy benefit ſhould not be, as it were of neceſſity, but willingly.* If St. *Paul* had detain'd *Oneſimus*, he had done *Philemon* no injury, of which he could juſtly complain; for if he had kept him, it had been only that he might have miniſtred to St. *Paul* in his ſtead; he had therefore been employ'd in the ſervice of his maſter, whilſt he was buſied in the ſervice of the Apoſtle: he might have preſum'd upon *Philemon*'s conſent to a thing ſo reaſonable in it ſelf; but then there might ſeem to be a force put upon *Philemon*, tho' he was truly under no compulſion; his ſubmiſſion might ſeem neceſſary, ho' it was really voluntary: that therefore there might be no appearnce of conſtraint put upon him; that the favour of either continuing *neſimus* in St. *Paul*'s ſervice, or keeping him in his own, ſhould be erfectly free, the Apoſtle chooſes rather to ſend him back, than to dein him; and by thus allowing *Philemon* his liberty to act according his own pleaſure, teaches him which way to determine his choice, as to do himſelf the moſt honour, and to oblige the Apoſtle in the oſt ſenſible manner. If he conſider'd *Oneſimus* as a fugitive and runay, he had juſt reaſon to be angry with him; but if he conſider'd w much good divine providence had wrought out of evil, this would ate the edge of his reſentment: *for perhaps he therefore departed for* v. 15, 16, 17. *ſeaſon, that thou ſhouldſt receive him for ever; not now as a ſervant, t above a ſervant, a brother beloved, eſpecially unto me, but how uch more unto thee, both in the fleſh and in the Lord? If thou count e therefore a partner, receive him as my ſelf.* Here again the Apoe in his ſoftning way calls that a departure, which in the reality of e thing was running away; he lays hold of that turn, which God's ovidence had given to the flight of *Oneſimus*, as a mitigation of his ult; he extenuates the blame of it from the ſhort time of his abſence, *departed but for a ſhort ſeaſon*; for an hour, as the *Greek* hath it. e might have been longer perhaps gone away from his maſter, but om the time he had come to *Paul*, he ought not to be reckon'd as ſent, being employ'd in his maſter's buſineſs. But had his abſence en longer, it would be amply made amends for by his future atndance and diligence; he was now better principled, than when he fore deſerted; and his maſter might depend upon it, that he would t again forſake his ſervice: if he now receiv'd him, it would be for er; he would be ſo ſenſible of his maſter's kindneſs, that, like the rpetual ſervants mention'd in the Law, he would ſay, *I love my mar, I will not go out free*: if *Philemon* would entertain him upon his turn, he would have in him a faithful ſervant for ever, that is, to e laſt period of his life; nay, he would have him as a brother and cortner of the ſame faith *for ever*, in the utmoſt extent of that word, arer of the ſame bliſs to all eternity; for he now ſtood related to im in an higher and nobler regard, than he had done heretofore; not a ſlave, whom he might think himſelf at liberty to treat according his arbitrary will and deſpotick pleaſure, but as a brother; one enafted into the ſame myſtical body of Chriſt's Church with himſelf; ll'd to the ſame hope; partaker of the ſame faith; initiated in the me baptiſm; made a diſciple of the ſame Lord Jeſus Chriſt; adopted ſon of the ſame God and Father of all; in all theſe reſpects a beloved other; one whom St. *Paul* was not aſham'd to call brother; nay, one hom Chriſt was not aſham'd to reckon among his brethren; and whom erefore *Philemon* ſhould not diſdain to receive and entertain as a broer; but ought to ſhew all kindneſs and favour to, on account of his rmer relation in the fleſh, as having been ſerviceable to him in his orldly employments, and on account of his new relation in the Lord, one who being now a Chriſtian, might be alſo ſerviceable to him in s ſpiritual intereſts. If therefore *Philemon* counted *Paul* as a parter, if he look'd upon him as a friend, he would receive *Oneſimus*, who as ſo powerfully recommended by him; if he would make the Apole welcome, ſhould he in perſon come to him, he would give the ſame earty welcome to *Oneſimus*, whom the Apoſtle lov'd, even as he did is own ſelf.

Lest all that had been hitherto urg'd by the Apoſtle, ſhould prove too little; leſt a reparation of the wrongs done by *Oneſimus* to his maſter ſhould be inſiſted upon as the only condition of his pardon, the Apoſtle proceeds to enter into a formal obligation for the giving him full ſatisfaction in this point; but at the ſame time inſinuates, that what was by him thus frankly offer'd, ought not by the other to be accepted; becauſe *Philemon* was more a debtor to him, St. *Paul*, than *Oneſimus*, v. 18, 19. tho' he wrong'd him never ſo much, could be to *Philemon*. *If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on my account. I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not ſay to thee how thou oweſt unto me even thine own ſelf beſides.* St. *Paul* had reſcued *Philemon*, not from poverty, not from a jayl, but from everlaſting darkneſs and miſery; *Philemon* was indebted to him, not for a petty ſumm of money, but for his own precious ſoul: tho' therefore this debt of *Oneſimus* ſhould be put to *Paul*'s account, and never be repaid by him, he would not thereby become *Philemon*'s debtor. If a calculation was made of what had been receiv'd from St. *Paul*, and what had been paid to him, after this debt of the ſervant was cancell'd, it would appear upon the foot of the account, that *Philemon* was ſtill a debtor to the Apoſtle: for he muſt have a ſlender notion of the value of an immortal ſoul and eternal bliſs, who did not think them more than an equivalent for any favour he could beſtow. That the Apoſtle therefore might not ſeem to reproach *Philemon* with a ſuſpicion of being ſo rigorous in his demands, as to expect from St. *Paul* a compenſation of the damages done by *Oneſimus*, he again renews his requeſt, without entring into any ſuch engagement, and expreſſes a great confidence in him, that he would not only anſwer, but exceed his deſires: v. 20, 21. *Yea, brother, let me have joy in thee in the Lord; refreſh my bowels in the Lord. Having confidence in thy obedience, I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt alſo do more than I ſay.* He muſt have an heart of ſteel, who could reſiſt ſuch moving ſtrains as theſe; he muſt deſire never to feel any joy again, who would not do much more, than was now ask'd of him, to contribute to the joy of St. *Paul*, who was at this time a priſoner; he muſt have no bowels, who would not by ſo ſmall a boon refreſh the bowels of an Apoſtle; he muſt ill deſerve the good opinion St. *Paul* entertain'd of him, who could be inexorable to ſuch perſwaſive arguments, ſuch prevailing language, ſuch alluring charms of eloquence, as ſhine throughout this whole Epiſtle.

To ſhut up all, the Apoſtle intimates to *Philemon* a deſign, which tho' it might ſeem foreign to his main buſineſs, yet might tend as much, v. 22. as any thing that had been ſaid, to promote it: *But withall prepare me alſo a lodging; for I truſt that thro' your prayers, I ſhall be given unto you.* It is a known obſervation, that letters do not bluſh; what men would be aſham'd to ask in perſon, that they are bold enough to ask by letter: and it is as true, that the readers of letters do not bluſh; they are hardy enough to deny that to their abſent friends, which they could not refuſe them if preſent. The Apoſtle therefore intimates to *Philemon* his intention to viſit him ſhortly; who muſt for that reaſon be the more inclin'd to gratifie him, as not being able to look him in the face, and to bear his preſence, if he ſhould denie him, this ſmall, this reaſonable, this importunate requeſt.

Thus have I gone thro' the main part of this elegant Epiſtle of St. *Paul*, the remaining verſes being only ſome ſalutations from friends, and

and the uſual bleſſing, and have pointed out to you ſome of thoſe beauties, which you your ſelves upon a curſory view of it may not perhaps have obſerv'd. I have not time to expatiate upon thoſe practical reflections, which naturally ariſe from what hath been deliver'd; and which I ſhall therefore barely mention, and leave the improvement of them to your own thoughts.

THE moſt obvious inference, which offers it ſelf at firſt view, is this, that we ſhould not deſpiſe any perſons, by reaſon of the meanneſs of their outward condition; that we ſhould love and eſteem men, not ſo much by the rank and place they bear in the world, as by the inward qualities and graces of their ſouls; that we ſhould not treat even ſervants with an air of haughtineſs and inſolence, as if they were creatures of another kind from us, and of a ſpecies below us, but ſhould ſhew them all that humanity, which is due to them as men, who are partakers of the ſame nature, and with all that love and affection, which are due to them as Chriſtians, partakers of the ſame grace with our ſelves. We are not greater or better than the Apoſtle St. *Paul* was; our ſervants are not meaner or worſe than *Oneſimus* had been: let us reflect on St. *Paul*'s conduct towards him, and by that let us regulate ours towards them.

ANOTHER inference, which may be made from the ſubject matter of this Epiſtle, is, that we ſhould uſe that intereſt we have with men of power and authority, for the advantage of thoſe, who ſtand in need of our patronage and help. Let us conſider with what earneſtneſs St. *Paul* recommends the cauſe of *Oneſimus* to *Philemon*, and when we have the like opportunity, let us ſhew the like zeal to do good offices to the helpleſs and friendleſs.

ANOTHER inference which may be drawn from this Epiſtle is, that we ſhould not deſpair of the reclaiming of any ſinners, be they at preſent never ſo wicked. Let us conſider the great difference there was in the character of *Oneſimus*, when he run away from, and robb'd his maſter, and when St. *Paul* ſent him back with this recommendatory Letter; and we ſhall not judge the caſe of any ſinner to be quite deſperate, becauſe he ſeems at preſent very profligate.

ANOTHER inference is this, that, when ſinners are reclaim'd from their vicious courſes, we ſhould not upbraid them with their paſt faults. Let us conſider the tenderneſs of St. *Paul* towards *Oneſimus*; with what affection he ſpeaks of him, and ſollicits for him, and mitigates his faults; and we ſhall not be over-rigorous and ſevere in ripping up the former miſcarriages of thoſe, in whom we find a thorough-reformation.

ANOTHER inference is, that thoſe who have miniſtred to others in ſpiritual things, ſhould not from thence aſſume over them a right of commanding and influencing them in temporal affairs. Let us conſider that *Philemon* ow'd himſelf, his converſion, his hopes of everlaſting happineſs to St. *Paul*; let us obſerve how cautious St. *Paul* is of taking any advantage therefrom, to enjoyn his compliance with what he here deſir'd by way of authority; and we ſhall not ſo far proſtitute things ſacred, as to mix ſecular intereſts with ſpiritual, and to affect the government of thoſe in the things of this world, who may have a love and eſteem for us, and ſome obligations to us, as being appointed their guides to lead them in the way to heaven.

ANOTHER inference is, that we ſhould not look upon the firſt preachers of the Goſpel, as men of no skill, no learning, no addreſs.

We have a convincing proof to the contrary in this Epiſtle of St. *Paul*; and if in other parts of his writings he doth not addreſs himſelf to his readers with ſo much art, as he doth here, it is not becauſe he was not maſter of it, but becauſe he thought it beneath the dignity of his ſubject, and unbecoming the ſimplicity of the Goſpel, to make uſe of it. His *ſpeech and his preaching was not with enticing words of man's wiſdom, that our faith might not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God*; as he himſelf teaches us. 1. Cor. 2. v. 5.

THE laſt inference, which I ſhall make from what hath been diſcours'd, is this, that if this part of Scripture, which hath been generally look'd upon as the moſt dry, and barren, and unedifying, is thus fruitful of wholſom, and practical, and uſeful truths, we ſhould have an high eſteem and reverence for theſe divine oracles, which are ſo well fraught with wiſdom and knowledge; and ſhould value, as we ought, all the holy Scripture, *which is all given by inſpiration of God, and is all profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſh'd to all good works.* 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

SER-

SERMON XL.

Evil-Appearance.

1 Thess. V. 22.

Abſtain from all Appearance of Evil.

The firſt ſermon on this Text.

THE original word, which we render appearance, doth, in the notion and language of philoſophers, ſignifie the ſeveral kinds, or, as they chuſe to call them, ſpecies or ſorts of things; and is, for that reaſon, by ſome interpreters expounded here of the different kinds and ſorts of evil: ſo that, according to their ſenſe of the words, the duty here enjoyn'd by St. *Paul* is this, that our lives and converſations ſhould be uniformly and entirely free from all ſin; that we ſhould not think our forbearance of ſome works of unrighteouſneſs will atone for our allowing our ſelves in others; or that by the obſervance of all the laws of God, except two or three, or even one, we may compound for our wilful breach of thoſe few, or even of that one; but that we ſhould religiouſly abſtain from all manner of evil, and, as the ſame Apoſtle elſewhere expreſſes it, *ſhould cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.* 2 Cor. 7. 1.

Now tho' this perfection is a neceſſary duty, frequently inculcated in holy Scripture, and every where preſs'd home upon our conſciences with a warmth and earneſtneſs ſuitable to the great importance of it; yet it is not, I think, intended by St. *Paul* in this place, nor the proper and genuine import of theſe words. For tho' we ſhould ſuppoſe our Apoſtle, who was certainly a great proficient in ſeveral parts of human learning, and who appears to have been converſant in the writings of the heathen poets, to have been no ſtranger to the books and notions of their philoſophers, but to have been well acquainted with the forms of logick, and the peculiar dialect of the ſchools; yet we ſhall ſcarce judge it probable, that in thoſe writings, which are addreſs'd to the people unacquainted with theſe terms, he ſhould uſe plain and familiar words rather in a ſtrain'd and philoſophical, than in their known, obvious, and popular ſenſe.

The word, which in this place is rendred appearance by our tranſlators, wherever elſe it occurs in the inſpir'd Writers, doth plainly require this ſenſe, and cannot poſſibly admit of any other. And the only reaſon, as far as I can gueſs, why ſome interpreters have departed from that ſenſe of the word in this place, which it is by all acknowledg'd to bear, wherever elſe it is met with in holy Writ, is the ill uſe that hath been made of this Apoſtolical precept by ſome ignorant and perverſe men, who, upon pretence of our being requir'd here by St. Paul *to abſtain from all appearance of evil,* have refus'd to pay due obedience to lawful authority commanding lawful things; becauſe what hath been exacted from them, tho' in it ſelf and in their judgment innocent, either did, or poſſibly might appear to ſome one or other, to have in it ſome faint ſhadow of a reſemblance to ſomething not very unlike to ſin.

To ſhew that this text gives no countenance to ſuch an extravagant and unwarrantable doctrine, which ſtrikes at the root of all authority, ſome have choſe ſo to interpret it, as if it did not at all concern the caſe of ſcandal; but I ſee no neceſſity of this over-nice caution, ſince it cannot be denied, but that the giving of ſcandal, where it is juſtly imputed, is undoubtedly a ſin; and that *to abſtain from the appearance of evil,* whether commanded by our Apoſtle in this place or not, is certainly a Chriſtian duty. For tho' our holy Religion is much more careful to provide for the purity of our heart, and the ſincerity of our inward intentions, than for the bare ſurface and external appearance of our actions; tho' we are every where in Scripture taught rather to approve our ſelves to God, and to our own conſciences, than to be anxious how we ſtand in the opinion of the world; yet when this main end is once ſecur'd, and the glory of God is made the firſt and chief aim of all our words and actions, in ſubſervience to this, a modeſt regard to our reputation and the eſteem of men, and a due care to *let our light ſo ſhine forth before them, that they may ſee our good works,* is not only permitted us, as free from all blame, but peremptorily commanded, as matter of ſtrict and indiſpenſable duty. Chriſtian ſincerity requires of us, that we ſhould appear to the world ſuch as we truly at the bottom are: all falſe appearances, whether of good qualities which we want, or of evil ones, which by our own care and by the grace of God we are free from, are by the precepts of the Goſpel equally forbidden. We are not to act a part, or to repreſent any other perſons, whether better or worſe, than we in truth and reality are; and in ſtrictneſs both of notion and language that man is indeed an hypocrite, who puts on a diſguiſe, whether the vizor he wears renders him more comely, or more deform'd. It is not enough to juſtifie us, that we appear virtuous, unleſs we are inwardly and at the heart, what we outwardly to the eyes of men appear; but on the other ſide, to free us from all blame, we muſt not only be clear from the guilt of ſin, but even from the colour of ſuch guilt. We are then ſuch, as by the law of God, and by the rules of the Goſpel we ought to be, when we both appear to the world righteous, and truly are ſo; and when we neither are in any kind or degree wicked, nor do ſo much as appear ſo.

What I ſhall offer upon this ſubject, will fall under theſe three heads.

I. The extent of this duty, how far we ought to abſtain from all appearance of evil.

II. Some rules and directions, how we may ſo abſtain.
III. The reaſons of this duty, why we ought ſo to abſtain.

Firſt The extent of this duty, how far we ought to abſtain from all
ppearance of evil.

In ſettling the bounds of this duty we muſt take care, neither to in-
erpret the precept with ſo much rigour, as to render it utterly im-
racticable; nor, on the other ſide, to bring it within ſo narrow a com-
aſs, and give ſo looſe a ſenſe of it, as to make it of little or no uſe
 us in the conduct of our lives. The command will be interpreted
 too ſtrict and rigorous a ſenſe, and thereby rendred impracticable,
it be ſuppos'd to require of us either things without our reach, and
npoſſible to be done; or ſuch as are beyond the bounds of our Chri-
ian liberty, and unlawful for us to do. We cannot therefore think
ur ſelves oblig'd, by virtue of this command, to abſtain from all actions,
hich may poſſibly appear evil to ſome men; becauſe we neither do,
or can know, what judgments men will form of our actions, and con-
quently ſhall be reſtrain'd from acting at all, if we are under an obli-
ation to do nothing, but what we are before-hand aſſur'd will appear
 all men fit and proper to be done. Neither yet can we be oblig'd al-
ays to forbear even thoſe actions, which we have juſt reaſon to think
ill carry with them an *appearance of evil.* For that action may ſeem
vil in the opinion of ſome men, which we are poſitively requir'd to
erform by the expreſs commandment of God; and no one can be ſo
npiouſly abſurd, as to think himſelf diſcharg'd from obedience to God,
r fear of thwarting the judgment of miſtaken or wicked men. Now
there be no action ſo indifferent, but what, for ought we know, may
hance to appear ſinful to ſome ignorant men; nor any duty ſo highly
bligatory, but what we perhaps ſee will, thro' prejudice or corruption,
e evil-thought of, we ſhall lay an unſupportable reſtraint upon our li-
erty, if we debar our ſelves from all innocent actions for fear of of-
ending ſome; and we ſhall ſtretch it too far, if we ſhould preſume
 diſpenſe with the omiſſion of what is abſolutely neceſſary, as be-
g requir'd by the laws of God, that we may avoid the cenſure of
thers.

There are ſo many corrupt motives to biaſs men in the judgments
hey paſs upon the actions of each other, and to incline them rather
o condemn the innocent, than to acquit the guilty, that no one can be
ecure of a ſafe deliverance, who puts himſelf upon ſo unequal a trial;
or ought we to have the worſe opinion of the merits of our cauſe, for
ts being condemn'd by unſkilful or partial judges. Precipitation of
nind, and haſte to conclude without weighing premiſes, will diſpoſe ſome
o judge at ſight without tarrying for ſufficient evidence: confuſ'd no-
ions and indiſtinct apprehenſions of the exact differences between good
nd evil will incapacitate others from diſcerning, what evidence is ſuffi-
ient to ground a right judgment upon. No one can thoroughly judge
f men's actions, but he who is acquainted with their inward inten-
ions; and therefore judgment properly belongeth to him, *who ſearcheth* Pſal. 7. 9.
he heart, and trieth the reins; *who knoweth what is in the darkneſs,*
nd with whom dwelleth light; *who is a God of knowledge, and by* 1 Sam. 2. 3.
hom actions are weigh'd; *who ſeeth not as man ſeeth*; *for man look-* c. 16. 7.
eth on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart.
Hence we are with good reaſon commanded *to judge nothing before the* 1 Cor. 4. 5.

time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the counſels of the heart.

Now, if in defiance of this expreſs prohibition, men will boldly anticipate the judgment of God; if they will intrude into that high office, which is his purchaſe and peculiar, *who both died, and roſe, and reviv'd, that he might be judge both of the dead and living*; if, inſtead of preparing to ſtand before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, they will place themſelves upon it, and preſume to judge their brethren; we cannot be ſurpris'd, if they groſly fail in the exerciſe of an authority, which doth in no wiſe appertain unto them, and make the worſt uſe of that power, which they ſacrilegiouſly invade. This therefore will always diſpoſe men to judge wrong, that they arrogate a juriſdiction, to which they have no title; take upon them an office, for which they are not at all qualified; and proceed by a rule, which is neceſſarily and unavoidably falſe: for they can only judge by what appears to them; and that this is a wrong way of judging in this caſe, we are taught by our Saviour, who hath oppos'd *judging according to appearance* to *the judging of righteous judgment*.

Rom. 14. 9.

John 7. 24.

But tho' want of light will neceſſarily diſable men from judging as they ought; yet it would have no proper tendency to incline them rather to the ſevere, than to the favourable ſide, did it not meet with other diſpoſitions, which ſtrongly influence them to entertain hard thoughts of each other.

Ill-nature and ſowrneſs of temper, which ſome men bring with them, as they do original ſin, into the world, and which the moſt powerful working of God's grace doth ſeldom entirely ſweeten and correct, render thoſe in whom they are ſtrongly rooted, and highly predominant, very averſe to obſerve any thing commendable, or ſo much as excuſable in others; and very quick-ſighted to diſcover, or to imagine that they diſcover, ſomething amiſs in the very beſt and moſt unexceptionable actions. This willingneſs to find fault puts them upon nicely weighing and examining what they have before-hand reſolv'd to condemn: they inſidiouſly enquire what principles each perſon acts by; what was his intent and deſign; what motives ſet him on work; after what manner the action is perform'd; what may be the fruits and conſequences of it; what one circumſtance can be pitch'd upon, which, by being chargeable with ſome blemiſh it might have been clear of, or wanting ſome degree of perfection it might have had, may caſt a ſtain and blot upon the whole action, and render it at leaſt of a doubtful and ſuſpicious nature. But when this ill humour is ſet on work by paſſion or reſentment; when perſons thus naturally diſpos'd to find fault, are provok'd by any real or imagin'd injury to look into the ways, and examine the actions of one, who hath offended them, or to whom they bear an enmity or ill-will; then the enquiry is ſtill more ſtrict and ſevere; then *they look narrowly into all his paths, and ſet a print upon the heels of his feet*; *they number his ſteps, and watch over all his goings*: malice whets the induſtry of the ſearch, and impatience of being diſappointed in this enquiry will not ſuffer them to deſiſt, till by a long train of deductions they have at laſt, as they imagine, found that to be true, which they at firſt only wiſh'd or ſuppos'd to be ſo.

Zeal for a cauſe, and bigotry for a party are ſtill freſh inducements to diſpoſe even well-meaning and good-natur'd men to make the worſt conſtruction of what thoſe do, who are liſted under other colours than

they

they are, and in their way of thinking and acting, in their religious or political ſentiments, differ from them. For as far as other men's opinions and practices differ from theirs, ſo far they pronounce them to be wrong; and then it is no difficult thing to ſuppoſe, that thoſe, who embrace ſome bad principles, and allow themſelves in ſome wicked practices, ſhould be conſiſtent with themſelves, and in every thing they think or do be miſtaken and perverſe.

But nothing more ſtrongly inclines men to paſs ſevere judgments upon others, than hypocriſie; for thoſe, who are tinctur'd with this leaven of the *Phariſees,* take care by their being always upon the watch to eſpy faults, to fill up the reſt of their character: having themſelves the bare form of godlineſs without the power of it, they are nice criticks, and rigid exactors of outſide and appearance: eating with publicans and ſinners ſhall be ſtyl'd ſcandalous converſation, and open countenancing of vice: a pleaſant countenance, and a face not disfigur'd, are with them evident tokens of unmortified affections: plucking ears of corn to ſatisfie hunger, and healing the ſick, are interpreted an unholy profanation of the ſabbath: eating with unwaſh'd hands is uncanonical, and contrary to the tradition of the elders: caſting out devils, which cannot be condemn'd in general, becauſe pretended to by themſelves, when done by another, ſhall prove him an inſtrument of Satan, as *caſting out devils by the power of Beelzebub the prince of the devils.* Thus careful are thoſe notorious hypocrites to ſet off their own falſe appearances of holineſs, by ſullying the reputation of others; to ſhut up the kingdom of heaven againſt men by their uncharitable cenſures; and to juſtifie themſelves before God, by drawing up an indictment againſt extorting, unjuſt, and adulterous publicans.

But ſtill others there are, who are apt to judge the worſt of every man, purely to ſhew their talent in judging: they have, as they pretend, read books and men; they have conſulted the laws and inclinations of human nature; they have taken it as it were to pieces, and examin'd the firſt ſprings of each motion and action; they have learn'd to diſtinguiſh betwixt appearances and realities, and to diſcover the wolf or fox that lurks under ſheeps-cloathing; and by a cloſe inſight and deep penetration into the working of men's minds, and eſpecially by looking narrowly into their own, they have diſcover'd that all men are ſelfiſh, and govern'd by no other principle than their worldly intereſt; that virtue and piety are only empty names, and conſiſt in bare outward ſhew; and that he at laſt is the beſt man, who is the moſt dextrous hypocrite.

Now the moſt harmleſs and inoffenſive action, when it comes to be canvaſs'd by men of this pretended depth and reach, is ſure to meet with the ſame ill treatment, as a plain text doth, when it falls into the hands of a profound and ſubtle cabaliſt, who not content with that ſenſe which lies uppermoſt, and which firſt offers it ſelf, will always ſtrike out ſome myſtical and hidden meaning, which the author never intended, and which no vulgar apprehenſion could ever have fathom'd.

It were eaſie to enumerate many other cauſes, why men ſhould be inclin'd to put the worſt ſenſe upon the actions of others: for whatever motives diſpoſe men to ſpeak evil of their brethren, will at laſt incline them to think evil alſo. For tho' 'tis uſual enough for thoſe, who are addicted to calumny, to ſpeak worſe of thoſe whom they ſlander, than they think; yet a groundleſs and down-right lie is ſo ſhocking to human nature, that men are very forward to believe, what they are reſolv'd to affirm: and what hath been obſerv'd in other caſes, is true in this of calumny, that a man may repeat a lie ſo often, till at laſt he thinks it to be true. In ſhort, every ſin a man is guilty of moves him to ſuſpect the worſt of others: for it much ſtrengthens the good opinion we have of our ſelves, to think that we are not worſe than our neighbours, and we are agreeably taken off from conſidering *the beam that is in our own eye*, whilſt we are employ'd in looking upon *the mote in our brother's eye*.

Now whilſt men are thus ignorant and partial, apt to judge without evidence, and with prejudice; whilſt they are ill-natur'd and revengeful, diſpos'd to think ill by their frame and conſtitution, and provok'd to do it out of reſentment; whilſt they are deeply engag'd in parties, and are uncharitable towards thoſe, who differ from them out of pure zeal; whilſt they are full of hypocriſie, and would exalt themſelves by abaſing others; whilſt they affect to appear wiſe, and think they beſt ſhew their wiſdom by finding faults; whilſt they are addicted to detraction, and careful to furniſh themſelves with materials for ſlander; whilſt they ſtand ſelf-condemn'd of ſin, and are willing to conclude others under the ſame condemnation; whilſt there are theſe, and ſeveral other reaſons to corrupt their judgments concerning the actions of others; unleſs we could redreſs all theſe miſchiefs, and reform mankind, it will be impoſſible for us, whilſt we act at all, to abſtain from all actions, that have in them an *appearance of evil*.

But now, if on the other ſide we ſhould affirm, that in the government of our lives, and ordering of our actions, we ſhould have no regard at all to the opinions of ignorant or wicked men; that we ſhould not be at all ſollicitous what judgment they make of us, who either for want of skill are unable, or for want of charity are unwilling, to judge, as they ought; that our only endeavour ſhould be not to offend wiſe and good men, who are not apt to miſtake, nor diſpos'd to miſconſtrue things, and therefore not likely to be offended with any thing, but what is evidently and notoriouſly ſinful; we ſhall by ſuch a conſtruction contract this duty into too narrow a compaſs, and make it leſs extenſive, than the expreſs letter of Scripture, and plain dictates of reaſon, will fairly admit. For that we may not think that we are concern'd to juſtifie our conduct only to the ſenſible and wiſe, we are taught by
1 Pet. 2. 15. St. *Peter*, that *it is the will of God, that by well-doing we ſhould put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men*. That we may not ſatisfie our ſelves in being thought and ſpoke well of by the charitable and good-
2 Cor. 1. 12. natur'd, we are inſtructed by the example of St. *Paul*, *to do all we can do, that we may cut off occaſion of cenſure even from them, which deſire occaſion*. That we may not confine our tenderneſs of offending to
1 Cor. 10. 22. thoſe of our own faith and profeſſion, we are enjoyn'd to *pleaſe all men in all things*, and forbidden to *give offence to the Jews and to the Gentiles*, the declar'd enemies of our Religion, as well as to the Church of God. That we may not acquieſce in the good eſteem of our own friends
1 Tim. 5. 14. and party, we are requir'd to *give no occaſion to the adverſary to ſpeak reproachfully* of us; but to *ſhew ſuch uncorruptneſs and ſincerity, that he who is of the contrary part may be aſham'd, having no evil thing to ſay of us*. That we may not think it will ſuffice us to eſcape the cenſures of thoſe, who take only a tranſient and ſuperficial view of things, our behaviour muſt be ſuch, as will bear the ſevereſt ſcrutiny, that we

nay not fall into the ſnare and reproach of the devil, which is another 1 Tim. 3. 7. vord for an inſidious accuſer, one that *ſifts the diſciples as wheat*, and ould find ſomething to object againſt that man, of whom it was de-lar'd, that *there was none like him in the earth, a perfect and an up-ight man, one that feared God, and eſchewed evil.* Job. 1. 8. In ſhort, that we nay not conclude any one man whatſoever under ſuch a ſtate of igno-ance or ſin, that we ought wholly to ſlight his opinion, and to be al-ogether indifferent how our actions appear to him, we are taught *by nanifeſtation of the truth to commend our ſelves to every man's con-cience in the ſight of God.* 2 Cor. 4. 2.

And as this is the repeated doctrine of the Goſpel, ſo alſo is it ſtrong-y founded in the reaſon and nature of the thing. For upon whatever rounds the appearance of evil is to be avoided; whatever are the miſ-hievous effects of ſuch an appearance, whether the blaſting our own eputation, or diſhonouring the name of God, or tempting others to in by the ſcandal of a ſeeming-bad example, or the occaſioning them o offend by raſh and uncharitable cenſures; theſe are as likely to be the ffects of ſuch an appearance, when our actions ſeem evil in the ſight f fooliſh and ungodly men, as when eſteem'd ſuch in the opinion of nen of ſound piety, and good underſtanding.

Now if what hath hitherto been inſiſted on doth prove, that we are ot oblig'd by this precept to abſtain from all actions that appear evil, ecauſe the moſt innocent and unblameable may appear ſinful to igno-ant and wicked men; and yet that in the ordering of our converſation ve are bound to have a reſpect to the opinion of all men, and to fence nd guard our actions againſt the miſtakes and calumnies of the moſt imple and malicious; if that which to ſome in fact will appear evil, oth lawfully may, and ſometimes neceſſarily muſt be done, and yet he appearance of evil muſt at all times, and in all caſes, be ſtudiouſly nd carefully avoided; then our duty can be no other than this, that ve do whatever in us lies to juſtifie our ſelves to men, as well as to God; that we take all poſſible care ſo to place our innocent and laudable ctions in their true light, that the wrong and accidental appearance of vil may not be our fault; and that we uſe our utmoſt endeavour to void that appearance of ſin, which after our utmoſt endeavour cannot lways be avoided. For it is a wrong notion to think, that we are never to aim at any thing, but what we have ſome probable hopes of attaining: that indeed can be no part of our indiſpenſable duty, which it is not in our power to perform; but that may be the object of our earneſt endeavour, which we ſhall never actually compaſs. As we are commanded to *follow peace with all men*, tho' we muſt deſpair of ever obtaining, eſpecially in ſuch diſtracted times as theſe, what we are bound ſtill to purſue; ſo we are requir'd *to provide things honeſt* or creditable *in the ſight of all men*, altho' the utmoſt proviſion we can make for this purpoſe may in the event prove ineffectual. The difficulty therefore, or even the moral impoſſibility of approving our conduct to the judgment of all who are witneſſes of it, ought not be urg'd as an excuſe for our not attempting it, but ſhould quicken our care, and ſtir up our vigilance, and make us exert our very utmoſt endeavours, that we may, as far as is poſſible, ſucceed in this laudable attempt.

In which endeavours that we may be the more ſucceſsful, I ſhall proceed in the

Second PLACE to give ſome directions, how we may beſt abſtain from the appearance of evil.

THE foundation of a fair appearance to the world muſt be primarily laid in the inward ſincerity of the heart; for the ſhorteſt, and ſafeſt, and perhaps the only way to appear good and virtuous, is really to be ſuch as we deſire to appear. A vital ſenſe of our duty to God, and a conſcientious care of offending him, muſt be the predominant principle, that gives laws to all we think, or ſpeak, or do; that whilſt we thus ſincerely endeavour to approve our ſelves to him, *before whom all things are naked*, we may promiſe our ſelves a good name amongſt men, both as the natural effect of a ſtrict care in nothing to offend, and alſo as the gracious reward of an unfeign'd piety towards God. We muſt, with the Acts 24. 16. Apoſtle St. *Paul, herein exerciſe our ſelves to have always a conſcience void of offence towards God, and towards men.* But we muſt, in the firſt place take care, that we do nothing which may juſtly offend God; and by ſo doing we ſhall uſe the moſt likely method of avoiding ſuch things, as are moſt apt to give offence to men. As we have a ſure Go- Luk. 12. 31. ſpel-promiſe, that *if we firſt ſeek the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs*, all other things which we want, the neceſſaries and comforts of life, ſhall be ſuperadded to us; ſo may we in like manner ſecurely depend upon the goodneſs of God, that if we make it our principal aim to approve our ſelves in his ſight, he, who can turn the hearts of men as he pleaſes, will diſpoſe them to think well of us, and to judge fa- 2 Cor. 8. 21. vourably and tenderly of all our actions. Tho' St. *Paul provided for honeſt things, not only in the ſight of the Lord, but alſo in the ſight of men*; yet was it his firſt aim, and chief ſtudy, to provide things acceptable in God's ſight; and therefore in the declaration of thoſe principles, by which Acts. 23. 1. he acted, he ſometimes mentions only his having taken care to *live in all good conſcience before God*, without ſaying any thing at all of his care to approve himſelf to men, this latter being virtually included in the other: at other times he ſeems totally to diſregard men's judgment of 1 Cor. 4. 3.4. him, as when he tells the *Corinthians, with me it is a very ſmall thing, that I ſhould be judged of you, or of man's judgment; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.* And by thus making it his principal care to pleaſe God, and to do ſuch things as are acceptable to him, he laid the beſt foundation for recommending himſelf to every man's conſcience, and for being ſpoken of with honour and applauſe in his own age, and in all ſucceeding generations.

NOW that our actions may thus appear well to the world, an honeſt ſimplicity of manners, and an unaffected openneſs of acting, without our taking care to ſhew it, muſt of it ſelf plainly appear in whatever we do. For if by any ſhew of artifice or cunning we do once get the character of crafty and deſigning men; if we give our ſelves leave to do any thing which looks like a trick, tho' it be for compaſſing even a good end; whatever we afterwards do, be our intentions never ſo ſincere, will lie open to the ſuſpicion of falſhood, and deceit; our actions, altho' to the eye they may have the gloſs and ſtamp of virtue, muſt ſtill be thought forg'd and counterfeit; and thoſe, who have once diſcover'd our tricking and double-dealing, will think they have hit upon the right key to decypher the whole ſecret of our conduct. But now, on the other ſide, when integrity and an uniform practice of virtue, founded upon religious principles, and ſhining thro' the whole courſe of our lives and converſations, have once eſtabliſh'd our character, and procur'd us a good eſteem in the world, this reputation will be the beſt guard againſt unkind ſuſpicions, and ſevere cenſures. What is doubtful in our carriage, and admits of ſeveral interpretations, will be conſtrued in analogy to what was without controverſy worthy of praiſe: an eſteem for our perſons gain'd by what we have done confeſſedly well, will incline men to judge the beſt of thoſe actions, which are not manifeſtly evil; and thoſe, who have entertain'd a favourable opinion of us for our former good life, will be willing to continue it, to ſhew the ſteadineſs of their own judgment, as well as out of affection towards us. For it is in this caſe, as in the point of honour, the niceſt judges of which will permit that to paſs uncenſur'd in men of known and acknowledg'd bravery, which in others of untried or ſuſpected courage they would be ſure to brand with the deepeſt marks of infamy and reproach; ſo frequent is it, and withal ſo reaſonable, that the ſame actions ſhould have a far different aſpect and appearance, when perform'd by perſons, whoſe characters are not at all alike. As *to the pure all things are pure*, becauſe they do them with a full perſwaſion of their lawfulneſs, and out of a right principle; but *to them that are defiled and unbelieving*, to them who act out of wrong principles, to them, who are polluted with vicious practices, *there is nothing pure*, nothing which they do, but hath ſome mixture of iniquity: ſo of them, whoſe lives and conduct, as to the general tenor of them, have been upright and unblameable, nothing notoriouſly wicked will be eaſily ſuſpected or credited; but of thoſe, whoſe converſations have in any inſtance been confeſſedly profligate and ſcandalous, every thing which is bad, every thing which is blame-worthy, will readily be ſuſpected, and generally believ'd.

AND as it is thus neceſſary, in order to our avoiding all appearance of evil, in the firſt place to purge our conſciences from every evil work, and to root out of our hearts thoſe ſeeds of vice, which, if they be ſuffer'd to remain there, will ſome time or other ſprout forth into unſeemly and ſcandalous actions; ſo in the ſecond place it will be highly expedient for us to be prudent and circumſpect in our outward behaviour. This is a rule, which our Apoſtle St. *Paul* hath laid down, and, for our greater edification, hath ſeveral times repeated. Thus he warns the *Epheſians*; *ſee that ye walk circumſpectly, not as fools,* who unneceſſarily expoſe themſelves to danger, to being ill-us'd, or evil ſpoken of, *but as wiſe*, who are careful to ſecure their intereſt, and their good name, where they can ſhelter themſelves from ſuffering and from diſgrace, by behaving themſelves with diſcretion without any prejudice to their intereſt. And the ſame wholſom admonition he gives to the *Coloſſians, Walk in wiſdom toward them that are without*, that is, toward the adverſaries of your Religion, who will be careful to watch all your ſteps, and will lay hold of any imprudent, any indiſcreet, any unwary carriage, whereby they may caſt a blemiſh upon you, and your holy profeſſion.

Epheſ. 5. 15.

Col. 4. 5.

NOT only *whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure,* but moreover *whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report, on theſe things* we are requir'd by the Apoſtle to *think*; and we muſt think of them, in order to our doing ſuch things. Towards doing ſuch things as are true, a ſincere love of truth will go a great way; towards doing ſuch things as are honeſt, an honeſt mind will mightily diſpoſe us; towards doing ſuch things as are juſt, an upright intention will very much

Phil. 4. 8.

contribute; towards doing ſuch things as are pure, an unbiaſs'd integrity of ſoul will ſtrongly carry us; but in order to our doing ſuch things as are amiable and reputable, there is farther requiſite a nice obſervation of what paſſes in the world, and an accurate judgment to diſcern, and care in our own conduct to imitate, that way and manner of acting, which makes ſome good men belov'd and eſteem'd, whilſt others, who are equal to them in goodneſs, but inferior in prudence, are, if not perfectly hated, yet at leaſt very much ſlighted and deſpis'd. If we are thus careful to obſerve what that manner of acting is, which ſo eaſily gains the affections and applauſes of men; and if we ſtudy, not only to do ſuch things, as are in themſelves fitting and right, but alſo to do them in this agreeable and acceptable manner, we ſhall by ſuch prudence and circumſpection in our conduct take the moſt likely means of avoiding the *appearance of evil.*

NEXT to that honeſt ſincerity of heart, and integrity of mind, which I recommended in the firſt place as the ſureſt way to ſecure our actions from an evil appearance; and to that prudence and circumſpection, which I have in the ſecond place recommended as the beſt guard of integrity, and greateſt ornament of virtue; I offer it as a third rule, well-worthy of our obſervance, that in the ordering of our lives and converſations, we take all poſſible care to diſtinguiſh our good and innocent actions from thoſe faults and vices, with which they are moſt likely to be confounded. For, in order to avoiding an evil appearance to the world, nothing can be more uſeful, than a diſtinct notion of the ſimilitude there is betwixt ſome virtues and ſome vices, and a ſtrict care, that our good and laudable, or at leaſt unblameable actions, be not miſtaken for thoſe evil ones, which they have any reſemblance to. For in all objects, which are taken the one for the other, there muſt be ſome ſhadow of likeneſs to occaſion this miſtake; and in the particular caſe now before us, there is ſcarce any vice, which doth not borrow the features of ſome virtue; or any virtue, which to a tranſient and careleſs view may not perhaps ſeem to have the colour of ſome vice. This likeneſs it is which gives room to the erroneous judgments of the ignorant, and the wilful miſrepreſentations of the malicious; without this there would be nothing to miſguide the one, nothing for the other to pervert: ſo that if we would ſecure our innocent or even commendable actions from an evil appearance, diligent caution muſt be us'd by us to diſtinguiſh them from thoſe particular vices, for which they are moſt likely to be miſtaken.

THUS for inſtance, devotion and hypocriſie, zeal and paſſion, moderation and lukewarmneſs, prudence and cunning, greatneſs of ſpirit and pride, humility and meanneſs, ſteadineſs and obſtinacy, meekneſs and inſenſibility, diligence and pragmaticalneſs, not to mention many others of the like affinity, have ſome lineaments ſo much reſembling each other, and by being ſo often call'd by each other's names, are ſo liable to be taken the one for the other, that unleſs we attend carefully to thoſe peculiar circumſtances in which they differ, and ſtudy to expreſs theſe diſtinct characters in our practice, the world muſt be much better natur'd, than we have reaſon to expect it ſhould be, if *our good be not evil ſpoken of.*

WOULD a truly devout perſon not be ſuſpected of hypocriſie? He muſt take care, that in his publick devotions there be nothing that is ſingular and affected; that in his countenance, in his geſtures, in his voice, there be no air or appearance of oſtentation; and as to his private

vate devotions, he muſt be careful that they be indeed private; that he doth not ſeem to court the eyes of men, when he is going or coming from his ſecret retirements; that when he is making his addreſſes privately to God, he do it not with ſo much noiſe and clamour, as to be over-heard by men, but that he ſtrictly obſerve our Saviour's direction; *Thou, when thou prayeſt,* thou ſincere diſciple of mine, who wouldſt not be as the hypocrites are, and who wouldſt not be thought to be what the hypocrites are, *enter into thy cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut the door, pray to thy Father which is in ſecret, and thy Father which ſeeth in ſecret ſhall reward thee openly.* Matth. 6. 6.

WOULD a zealous perſon not be look'd upon or repreſented as fiery and hot-headed; he muſt take ſtrict care, that his zeal be guided with knowledge, and temper'd with charity; that it bear a due proportion to the objects he is zealous for, or againſt; that it be more converſant about things, than about perſons; that he be not zealous for little things, and unconcern'd about greater; that he be not more zealous for or againſt an indifferent rite or ceremony, than for the Chriſtian Religion it ſelf, or againſt infidelity; that his zeal be not ſo intemperate and outrageous, as to eat him up, or to put him upon devouring his Chriſtian brethren.

WOULD a moderate perſon avoid the imputation of being luke-warm, he muſt take care that he be moderate only in ſuch things, where there is danger of exceſs, and where conſequently there is room and occaſion for moderation: where a mean is commendable, he muſt neither fly too high, nor creep too low; but in thoſe things, in which it is laudable to excell, he muſt not affect moderation: about things in their nature, in their uſe, and in their conſequence altogether indifferent, he may be indifferent, or not much concern'd; but he ſhould neither be, nor deſire to be thought, a moderate lover of piety and virtue, of peace and order; one that hath a moderate concern for the laws and liberties of his country, for the welfare and proſperity of his Church, for the honour, ſafety, or life of his Prince.

I SHOULD be oblig'd to run thro' the whole ſcheme of Chriſtian graces, if I ſhould undertake to point out thoſe peculiar excellencies, which do ſpecifie each, and which plainly diſcriminate them from thoſe ſeveral ſins, to which they might be imagin'd to have any the leaſt reſemblance. I ſhall content my ſelf by way of ſpecimen to ſingle out one, to wit the duty of my text, and to ſhew, how a nice regard to avoid all appearance of evil differs from vain-glory, and oſtentation; which I ſhall the rather do, leſt whilſt I exhort you to a neceſſary and important duty, I ſhould ſeem to give any countenance to the abominable ſin of hypocriſie.

NOW in order to our forming diſtinct notions of that due regard to outward appearance, which is here commanded, and that vain affectation of appearing righteous to men, which is in the Goſpel frequently condemn'd, we cannot better take our meaſures than from the different characters of our Apoſtle, whoſe practice will be the beſt comment on the advice he here gives, and of the *Phariſees*, to whom the woes denounc'd againſt vain-glorious hypocrites are by our Saviour immediately applied. St. *Paul* in ſome of his Epiſtles is very eloquent, copious, and even profuſe in his own commendation: he takes all poſſible care, and ſeems to uſe a great deal of art to poſſeſs thoſe, to whom he addreſſes himſelf, with a very high opinion of his own worth: he is careful to re-

remove every thing, that may leſſen their eſteem of him, and to confirm and improve every thing, that might ſtrengthen it. In his ſecond Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, c. 11. we have as it were the picture of himſelf drawn by his own hand, all the lines of which ſeem to be wrought off with exquiſite skill, and ſet out to the beſt advantage. He there particularly recites what he had done and ſuffer'd thro' the whole courſe of his miniſtry for the ſake of the Goſpel; he doubts not to compare himſelf with others, which is look'd upon as the moſt invidious way of any one's praiſing himſelf; and to ſhew thoſe peculiar advantages, in which he out-ſhin'd them, and thoſe ſpecial inſtances of God's extraordinary favour, which were vouchſaf'd him: he ſeems as punctual and particular in reckoning up his own good actions, as if he were ſtill an unconverted *Phariſee*; ſo that what he hath ſaid of himſelf by way of apology for this glorying, a *Latin* Father hath with too great bluntneſs charg'd him with as a fault, that *what he ſpeaks* on this occaſion, *he ſpeaks it not after the Lord, but fooliſhly in the confidence of boaſting*.

But now if we examine this matter a little more narrowly; if we take a more cloſe and diſtinct view of St. *Paul*'s conduct and aim in commending himſelf, and compare it with the management and deſign of the *Phariſee* in exalting his own good deeds; thoſe actions, which at firſt ſight ſeem'd ſomewhat akin, will upon a nearer view be found extremely different. The *Phariſee* voluntarily and of his own accord, without any occaſion given him, being full of himſelf, and ſo much ſwoln with pride, as to be ready to burſt, breaks out into a laviſh account of his own praiſes: what the Apoſtle ſaith of himſelf is extorted from him by the coldneſs of thoſe of whom he had deſerv'd well, and the reproaches of his adverſaries: if he glories, it is *becauſe they have compell'd him*; and what he doth, is not ſo properly done by way of boaſting, as in his own neceſſary vindication. The *Phariſee's* praiſes are intended to magnifie the merits of his perſon, the Apoſtle's, are plainly deſign'd to maintain the dignity of his character: the *Phariſee* hath no farther aim than his own honour, the Apoſtle hath no other than God's glory. The *Phariſee* goes on boldly without the leaſt reſerve or reſtraint, and begs no pardon, makes no apology for his extravant boaſting: the Apoſtle frequently checks himſelf, is ſenſible how tender a point he hath to manage, ſtops ſhort in the midſt of his glorying, and deſires ever now and then to be excus'd for it, as knowing it, tho' in ſome reſpect neceſſary, yet upon other accounts highly inexpedient.
2 Cor. 11. 1. *Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly, and indeed*
v. 16. *bear with me*: *Let no man think me a fool*; *if otherwiſe, yet as a fool*
c. 12. 1. *receive me, that I may boaſt my ſelf a little*: *it is not expedient doubt-*
v. 11. *leſs for me to glory*; *I am become a fool in glorying, ye have compell'd me*, are the expreſſions of one, that offer'd great violence to himſelf, when he found it neceſſary to ſpeak in his own commendation. The *Phariſee* takes care to extol his own merits, by expoſing the demerits of others: the Apoſtle doth not diſparage thoſe, with whom he compares himſelf, but only deſires they may have their due praiſe without
c. 11. 22, 23. his detriment. *Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Iſraelites? So am I. Are they of the ſeed of Abraham? ſo am I. Are they miniſters of Chriſt? I ſpeak as a fool, I am more*, is the higheſt pitch of the Apoſtle's boaſting. Are other men extortioners? So am not I. Are they unjuſt? So am not I. Are they adulterers? So am not I, is the language of the *Phariſee*. An air of ill-nature and uncharitableneſs plainly appears

ears in the *Phariſee's* preference of himſelf to the poor deſpis'd publi-an. The Apoſtle's praiſes of himſelf are the proper effect of a fervent harity and tenderneſs for thoſe, to whom they are addreſs'd: *He was* 2 Cor. 11. 2. *ealous with a godly jealouſy, leſt thoſe, whom he had eſpouſed to Chriſt,* hould, by a mean opinion of the preacher, be withdrawn from the ſimlicity of the Goſpel which he preach'd; and whether he abaſes, or ſomeimes extols himſelf, it is for this end, that they may be exalted. The *Phariſee's* praiſes of himſelf are throughout plain, open and direct: the reateſt things the Apoſtle ſaith of himſelf, are modeſtly couch'd under he name of a third perſon; *I knew a man in Chriſt above fourteen years* c. 12. 2. *go, ſuch an one caught up to the third heaven; of ſuch an one will I lory, yet of my ſelf I will not glory.* The *Phariſee* in his panegyrick pon himſelf is never found to ſay any one word by way of abatement: he Apoſtle frankly owns his failures; in the midſt of his glorying, talks f his infirmities; when he mentions *the abundance of his revelations,* v. 7. mits not the *thorn which was given him in the fleſh*; and when he eclares that *he is in nothing behind the very chiefeſt of the Apoſtles,* v. 11. t the ſame time readily confeſſes, that *he is nothing.* The *Phariſee ounds a trumpet before his alms, loves to pray ſtanding in the corners f the ſtreets, puts on a ſad countenance, and disfigures his face when e faſts, that he may have glory of men* for thoſe things, which ought o be done and kept in ſecret: the Apoſtle only reminds his flock of what ad before been publickly known to them, and neceſſarily muſt be ſo, f *his labours and his ſufferings, his travels and his dangers, his painfulneſs and his watchings, and his daily care of all the Churches.* c. 11. The *Phariſee* acquieſces in the approbation of men as his ultimate end and eſign: the Apoſtle, tho' he deſires to recommend himſelf to men's conſciences, yet eſteems *it a very ſmall thing, that he is judg'd of man's* 1 Cor. 4. 3, 4. *judgment*, knowing *that he is not hereby juſtified, but that he that judgeth him is the Lord.* To conclude, what at laſt moſt diſtinguiſhes the Apoſtle's care of appearing well from the *Phariſee's* is this, that St. *Paul* was n reality inwardly, what he outwardly deſir'd to appear; was firſt manifeſt unto God, before he endeavour'd to manifeſt himſelf to the conſciences of men: but the *Phariſees* were for cleanſing the outſide, without taking care of what was within; theſe *whited ſepulchres* were for *appearing beautiful outwardly,* whilſt inwardly they were *full of all uncleanneſs.* As much therefore as an unaffected, humble, pertinent, diſintereſted, modeſt, and decent recommending our ſelves to the good opinion of men by the outward appearance of thoſe virtues, which we ſincerely, heartily, and conſcientiouſly practice, in order to the edification of others, and to promoting the glory of God, differs from an affected, vain, impertinent, immodeſt, and unbeſeeming oſtentation of our own pretended good actions, in order to put upon the world, and to gain the empty applauſes of men; ſo far is the duty *of abſtaining from all appearance of evil,* which is commanded and exemplified by St. *Paul,* different from that vain ambition of appearing righteous to men, which is ſo frequently and ſeverely condemn'd by our Saviour in the Goſpel.

Thus have I endeavour'd, by ſeveral marks and characters, to diſtinguiſh the duty of my text from that ſin, to which it might ſeem to have ſome reſemblance; and it were eaſie to ſhew in the like manner, how all other Chriſtian virtues, when thoroughly examin'd, do widely differ from thoſe faults, to which at firſt ſight they may ſeem to have ſome likeneſs: ſo that if we take due care to diſtinguiſh them in our practice as clearly, as they are diſtinct in their notions, we may by this means be better able to *avoid the appearance of evil.*

And now having ſhewn the extent of this duty, how far we ought to abſtain from all appearance of evil, and given ſome directions for the better performance of it, in order to the more effectual recommending it to our practice, I ſhould proceed in the third place to ſhew the reaſon why we ought ſo carefully to *abſtain from all appearance of evil.* But not having time to diſpatch this now, I ſhall not enter upon it, but leave it to be ſupplied by your own better thoughts, or at leaſt defer it to another opportunity.

SERMON XLI.

Evil-Appearance.

1 Theſs. V. 22.

Abſtain from all Appearance of Evil.

The ſecond Sermon on this Text.

FROM theſe words I propos'd

I. To ſhew the extent of the duty here commanded, how far we ought to abſtain from all appearance of evil.

II. To lay down ſome rules, how we might beſt abſtain from ſuch appearance.

III. To offer ſome reaſons, why we ought ſo to abſtain.

THE two former parts I have already ſpoke to. I proceed now, in the laſt place, to give ſome reaſons, why we are oblig'd thus carefully to abſtain from all appearance of evil.

NOW the beſt reaſon that can be aſſign'd for our ſtrict care in this matter, and the only one that needs to be alleg'd, is this, that we are expreſsly commanded in the words of our Apoſtle, which are the words of God, thus to abſtain. For where he, who claims our obedience, hath an indiſputed title to it; where the will of ſuch an one is plainly declar'd, and the reaſons of his will are not manifeſted; where the ſubject, to whom the law is given, can be aſſur'd that there are wiſe reaſons, why ſuch a law ſhould be given, tho' they are not ſignified to him; there the undeniable authority of the law-giver, and not the ſuppos'd reaſon of the law, is the ground of our obligation to obey it. We may be eaſily miſtaken in gueſſing at the reaſons of this or any other of God's commands: we may be able to aſſign very plauſible reaſons why God ſhould require this duty at our hands, which perhaps after all may not be the true ones; or if we ſhould diſcover ſome true reaſons why this duty is enjoyn'd, we may ſtill be in the dark as to others of equal or greater weight: we may allege reaſons for the obſervance of this law, that may hold good in ſome caſes, but fail in others; and ſo ſhall be apt to think, that where theſe reaſons ceaſe, there our obligation to the law ceaſes with them. We may enforce obedience to this law upon ſuch reaſons, which are convincing to us, but may ſeem of no weight in the opinion of others; ſo that by building upon falſe grounds we may chance to overthrow, what we intended to eſtabliſh. When we bring many proofs of the reaſonableneſs of this duty, ſome of theſe, upon a nice examination, may be found frivolous, and the reſt ſuſpected for their ſake; at leaſt, what we take pains to prove, will be ſuppos'd to want proof; and whilſt we uſe arguments to perſwade men of the expedience of doing what God requires, the rules he gives will look like wholſom advice which it is convenient to follow, rather than peremptory commands which muſt of neceſſity be obey'd.

Upon theſe conſiderations it may ſeem to be the proper duty of the miniſters of God's Word barely to propoſe his laws, or, if occaſion be, to explain them; and it may be thought no part of their commiſſion, but rather an unneceſſary, if not a preſumptuous attempt, to go about to juſtifie as it were the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, by proving that his commands are reaſonable. God wills this duty, God requires it: he ſent his Son into the world to declare his will, and inſpir'd the Apoſtles to deliver it down to us: his authority is abſolute, his power is uncontrollable; the obſervance of his reveal'd laws will be attended with everlaſting happineſs, the neglect of them with everlaſting puniſhment, and therefore obedience to them is upon this bottom, without taking in any other conſiderations, highly reaſonable.

But altho' upon theſe views it may appear unneceſſary, or even unexpedient to enforce the duty of my text, which is an expreſs precept of the Goſpel, from any other topicks, than the arbitrary pleaſure of an Almighty Law-giver; yet ſince the Apoſtles do not always preſs obedience upon us by way of authority and command, but chuſe rather to work upon our hearts by the gentler methods of argument and perſwaſion; ſince thoſe, who were appointed under Chriſt the Lords of God's heritage, do not often exerciſe a dominion over our faith or our wills, but frequently make appeals to our own reaſon and judgment concerning the fitneſs of thoſe precepts, which they in God's name enjoyn; ſince God himſelf is in Scripture repreſented as ſtooping down from the throne of heaven, waving his abſolute power, and ſubmitting his laws to be look'd into, and narrowly examin'd, and to have ſentence paſt upon them, according to the reſult of our enquiries; ſince the ſame happens in the laws of God, as in the wonderful works of his hands, that the more curiouſly we ſearch into them, the more carefully we view them on all ſides, the more cloſely we look into their inward make and frame, and the relations they ſtand in to each other; the more we ſhall be aſtoniſh'd with their marvellous beauty and excellence, and the wiſdom of God diſplaying it ſelf thro' them; ſince laſtly, we may promiſe our ſelves this advantage from an humble and reverent ſearch into the reaſons of our duty, that the more ſcrupulouſly we examine the grounds of it, the more ſtrongly we ſhall be convinc'd of our obligations to it, and in conſequence of that conviction, the more readily diſpos'd to practiſe it; in order to this end I ſhall think it allowable to offer, eſpecially in ſuch an audience as this, which expects, not to be barely told what they are to do, but to be ſatisfied why they are to do it, ſome reaſons why we ought ſo carefully to *abſtain from all appearance of evil.*

Now the appearance of evil ought with the utmoſt care to be avoided or theſe reaſons,

1. Because it hurts our reputation.
2. Because it tempts others to ſin.
3. Because it may lead us on to the commiſſion of that, which is not only in appearance, but notoriouſly evil.
4. Because it directly tends to the diſhonour of God.

Firſt Then we are to abſtain from the appearance of evil, becauſe t will hurt our reputation.

That men, who have no other meaſures to judge by than outward ppearance, muſt neceſſarily judge of us according to what we openly ppear, and not according to what we inwardly are; and that therefore he appearance of evil will give as deep a wound to our eſteem amongſt men, as real guilt it ſelf would, is a truth ſo evident in theory, and ſo well confirm'd by conſtant experience, that it leaves no room for doubt or proof; and tho' it was neceſſary to be once mention'd, as making way for what we have farther to advance, yet it will not bear being any longer dwelt upon. The only queſtion here is whether a good name be a thing of that price, that it is worth our taking any pains to get or to keep it; whether a ſincere Chriſtian, who ought to ſit looſe to the world, and to approve himſelf to God, and to his own conſcience, ſhould let a regard to his reputation, and to the *loving favour of men*, bear any ſway at all in the governing of his actions; whether, when he can honeſtly ſatisfie himſelf, that what he doth is in it ſelf innocent, and pleaſing to God, tho' it may appear to others ſcandalous, the fear of hurting his good name thereby ought to reſtrain him from an action, which, by carrying the face of evil, will tend to his diſgrace.

Now that reputation is a real valuable good, and, as ſuch, ought to be of ſome weight with us in the conduct of our ſelves, is what, I preſume, would never have been queſtion'd, had not ſome men put ſo high a price upon it, and over-rated it ſo much, that others, to abate this extravagance, have run into the contrary extreme; and have ſunk it as much beneath, as the former had rais'd it above, its true worth. For ſome well-meaning men, not content to allege that the deſire of popular applauſe ought not to be the firſt and governing principle of our actions; that it is not in our power, whether we ſhall be thought well of or not, and that it is folly to place our chief happineſs in what we are not ſure to compaſs; that an over-eager purſuit of praiſe hath put men upon unwarrantable methods of obtaining it, and an immoderate fear of diſgrace hath betray'd many ſouls into the commiſſion of faſhionable ſins; that an affectation of vain-glory hath been the occaſion of the worſt, and hath blaſted the very beſt actions of men; ſome, I ſay, not content to allege theſe things in abatement of the exceſſive value, which hath been put upon reputation, have thought they could not cheapen it enough, unleſs they yet farther diſparag'd it, as an empty, vain, imaginary thing; deſtitute of any foundation in nature; prejudicial to the graces of the Goſpel; not worthy to be purſued by a wiſe, grave and thinking man, but induſtriouſly to be avoided by an humble, mortified, and ſelf-denying Chriſtian.

Now altho' there is generally more danger, that men ſhould, thro' their natural pride and vanity, be too fond of reputation, than that, thro' a miſtaken opinion of its worthleſsneſs, they ſhould ſhake off all due regard to the eſteem of others; yet becauſe ſuch a careleſs hazarding our good name, is attended with very evil conſequences, and is of great diſſervice to the intereſts of virtue and of Religion; becauſe a fair reputation may by good and wiſe men, and eſpecially by perſons plac'd in eminent and publick ſtations, and happy in the eſteem and loving favour of the people, be made uſe of for promoting the beſt and nobleſt purpoſes; it may not be improper to ſhew, that this indifference to a good or bad name is ſo far from being either a moral duty or a Chriſtian grace, that it is directly contrary to the rules of right reaſon, and to the precepts of the Goſpel.

A SENSE of ſhame or averſion to diſgrace, however it comes to be omitted by Moraliſts in their catalogues of the paſſions, is as deeply rooted in our natures, diſcovers it ſelf as early and as ſenſibly, and was, without queſtion, deſign'd by our wiſe and good Creator for as noble uſes, as any other affection we feel within us; and hath this preeminence above moſt of the reſt, that it is not common to us with other inferior beings; but ſeems peculiar to a rational nature; doth then firſt exert it ſelf, when we firſt begin to make uſe of our reaſon; grows up together with our underſtanding; is weaker or ſtronger, as our knowledge is more or leſs improv'd; works more powerfully on the minds of men civiliz'd and learned, than on ſuch as are uncultivated and untaught; is moſt quick and lively in thoſe, that are moſt humble, ſober, and ingenuous; and is ſcarcely ever to be wholly ſtifled and ſubdued but by ſuch, *who having their underſtandings darkned thro' the ignorance that is in them, or being paſt feeling* thro' an habitual courſe of vice, have their ſenſes too far ſtupified to diſcern between honour and diſhonour, praiſe and diſpraiſe, good and evil. As to thoſe who are not yet arriv'd to this perfection of inſenſibility, they cannot but feel a great uneaſineſs in their minds upon the thoughts of having done any thing, which may leſſen them in the opinion of thoſe, whoſe eſteem they value; and are ſure to find an equal pleaſure in being conſcious that their actions, which their own hearts condemn not, are approv'd by the concurrent judgment of thoſe, who paſs ſentence upon them.

WHY a favourable or evil opinion of us ſhould thus affect us, when attended with no other good or bad conſequences; when our intereſt is neither promoted, nor impair'd by ſuch opinion; when all the benefit or hurt we receive by it is owing merely to our own reflection upon it, may not perhaps be very eaſie to be accounted for; but the difficulty of explaining how a thing ſo foreign to us, as the ſentiments of others about us, ſhould ſo inwardly concern us, doth no more prove that there is no real good in being well-ſpoken of, nor evil in diſgrace, than the doubts which ſome have rais'd about the manner of ſenſible objects working upon the mind, and their ſuppos'd inability of raiſing agreeable or diſagreeable perceptions in our ſoul, do prove that there is no difference betwixt bitter and ſweet, pleaſure and pain, the kindly warmth that refreſhes us, and the ſcorching heat that torments us.

IT is eaſie here to tell us, that the difference betwixt honour and diſhonour, a good and an evil report of us, is not real, but fantaſtical; that it doth not reſult from the objects themſelves, but from our ſentiments about them; that they being without us and ſeparate from us, have no direct power of affecting our ſouls either way, but that the pleaſure or pain we feel on ſuch occaſions is purely from our ſelves, and from our own miſtaken fancies; that if we would correct our falſe ſentiments, it

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would be the ſame thing to us, whether we were approv'd or condemn'd by other men; and that therefore there is no need of our taking any care ſo to order our actions, as to procure our ſelves a good name, or to avoid an evil one; but we ſhould rather endeavour ſo to ſettle our notions, that it may be indifferent to us, whether we are well or evil-ſpoken of. Such ſtrain'd reaſonings as theſe, when thoroughly examin'd, amount to no more at laſt than this; that if we could imagine there was no difference betwixt honour and diſhonour, to us there would be none; and as true it is, that if we could thoroughly perſwade our ſelves, that pleaſure and pain were all one, to us they would be indifferent; which diſcoveries, as they muſt be allow'd to be no ſurpriſing paradoxes, ſo neither are they very edifying truths. For, whether a good or bad name have in themſelves any real efficacy upon our minds to make us eaſie or uneaſie; or, whether we only take occaſion from our being well or ill-ſpoken of to be pleas'd or diſturb'd; if, whenever ſuch occaſions offer, we cannot help being ſuch a way affected; a good reputation will ſtill be in its own nature valuable, and worth our aiming at; an ill name will be an ill thing, and worth our taking all honeſt means of avoiding: I ſay all honeſt means; for if reputation be no other ways to be gain'd, but by the loſs of our virtue, nor diſgrace any other way to be avoided, but by ſinful compliances, it is readily agreed, that the purchaſe of the one, and the avoidance of the other, would be very much too dear upon ſuch unequal terms. But it is no proof that a good name is not at all valuable, becauſe it is not ſo deſirable, as a good conſcience; or that reputation is worth nothing, becauſe our precious and immortal ſouls are worth a great deal more.

The true reaſon, why eſteem is ſometimes to be deſpis'd, and diſgrace in ſome circumſtances is to be courted, is not becauſe the one is in it ſelf deſpicable, and the other for its own ſake deſirable; but becauſe an undue thirſt after preſent fame might hinder us of greater glory in reverſion; and a patient bearing of diſgrace now may be an effectual method of eſcaping greater ſhame hereafter: ſo that to be well eſteem'd is abſolutely good, and to be ill-ſpoken of is abſolutely evil, tho' in compariſon of a greater honour the one may be a loſs, and in proportion to a greater ſhame the other may be an advantage. For as it is undoubtedly true, that a good Chriſtian is never oblig'd to refuſe any pleaſure, but what may deprive him of a greater ſatisfaction to come, nor to ſubmit to any pain, but that which he can't decline without danger of ſometime ſuffering pains more grievous; ſo I take it to be equally certain, that, according to the terms of the Goſpel, we are never forbidden to deſire the praiſes of men, but when, by ſuch ill-tim'd deſire, we may loſe the greater praiſes both of men and God; nor are ever oblig'd to chooſe ignominy, but when the unſeaſonable ſhunning of it may render us obnoxious to a greater and more laſting diſgrace.

Adorable therefore is the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, who having implanted in our breaſts ſuch a vehement deſire of glory, and ſuch a ſtrong averſion to ſhame, hath graciouſly provided, that whilſt we act by theſe motives we cannot finally miſcarry; ſince by his eternal decrees he hath order'd, and by his holy Goſpel he hath made known to us, that the greateſt glory of which our natures are capable, ſhall be the reſult of our obedience to his laws; and that we can no way lay up to our ſelves ſuch treaſures of ſhame againſt the day of ſhame, as by tranſgreſſing his righteous commandments. For it is very obſervable, that our future happineſs and miſery are in Scripture repreſented to us, not only under the notion of exquiſite pleaſure and pain, to work upon the hopes and fears of ſuch as are moſt affected with theſe ſentiments; but alſo as a ſtate of unmix'd glory or ſhame, to engage the deſires, and awaken the apprehenſions of ſuch, as by their different make of ſoul, or courſe of education, are moſt apt to be prevail'd upon by theſe more ingenuous motives. And indeed the fear of torment, tho' moſt ſuited to work upon the generality of mankind, muſt be own'd to be a leſs powerful reſtraint from ſin, than the apprehenſion of ſhame, if what hath been obſerv'd by ſome learned men is well-grounded, to wit, that tho' we have ſure promiſes in Holy Writ, that the ſins of thoſe who repent ſhall be forgiven, yet we have no aſſurance, that they ſhall not be remembred and expos'd; that ſince *nothing is ſecret which ſhall not be made manifeſt*, the ſins of the penitent as well as of the impenitent ſhall be brought to light; that God's mercy will be as much diſplay'd by the diſcovery of thoſe ſins which he ſhall pardon, as his juſtice ſhall be clear'd by the manifeſtation of thoſe which he ſhall puniſh; and that therefore tho' ſome ſhall at the day of judgment be forgiven, yet all ſhall be diſcover'd: if, I ſay, theſe notions are as ſound as they are ingenious, the fear of ſhame muſt be allow'd to have a greater influence to make men virtuous, than the apprehenſions of torment; ſince tho' timely repentance for paſt ſins may reſcue us from puniſhment, nothing but unſpotted innocence can ſecure us againſt the ſhame of diſcovery. But however this matter ſtands, it being plain from experience that we find a reliſh in eſteem, and are diſquieted in our minds by diſgrace; it being evident from reaſon that theſe affections were by God implanted in us as ſpurs to virtue, and preſervatives againſt vice, and it being expreſly commanded in Scripture, that we ſhould do thoſe things *that are of good report*, and avoid ſcandal as well as ſin; what ſome ſpeculative men may have unwarily advanc'd to prove that the diſtinctions betwixt honour and diſhonour, praiſes and reproaches, a good and a bad name are notional, and without any foundation in the nature of things, ought not to make us ſo indifferent towards them, as not to aim at eſteem, and guard againſt cenſure, by all wiſe and honeſt methods.

I am ſenſible upon what ſlippery ground I tread, and how cautiouſly I ought to proceed in recommending to you a nice ſenſe of honour, and a due regard to your reputation: every thing that is ſaid againſt valuing the eſteem of men has in it an air of piety and mortification, as tending to ſubdue in us the deteſtable ſin of pride; and, on the other ſide, every thing that is urg'd in favour of reputation, as a deſirable and valuable bleſſing, is liable to miſinterpretation, as tending to the nouriſhment of vanity and pride. But before I have done with this ſubject, which I have not time to diſpatch now, I doubt not but I ſhall make it manifeſt, that a juſt value may be ſet upon reputation, without any danger of pride; that the very notion of humility ſuppoſes reputation to be valuable; that there are ſeveral moral virtues and Chriſtian graces, whoſe worth and excellency can no otherwiſe be accounted for, than by allowing reputation to be valuable; and that there is no one virtue or grace but may be accounted for, without ſinking the value of reputation.

In the mean time what hath been already ſaid upon this head is ſufficient to our purpoſe: it hath been prov'd that our reputation is worth our ſecuring, and that it can no otherways be ſecur'd, but by avoiding

all

ll appearance of evil; whence it plainly follows, that being bound by ll honeſt means to preſerve our reputation, we are bound in order to his end to *abſtain from all appearance of evil.*

REPUTATION is one of thoſe talents, for which we are accountable o God: this may be improv'd by us to good purpoſes, and it may be ſquander'd away to no purpoſe, or to ill ones: it is poſſible that we nay be too covetous, but it is poſſible alſo that we may be too prodigal, of it. He who prefers his reputation to his conſcience, and had rather offend God, than be evil-ſpoken of by men, values it a great deal oo high; but he who makes his reputation ſubſervient to the keeping good conſcience, and in obedience to God takes care of his reputation mong men, values it no higher than a wiſe man and good Chriſtian ought. What value right reaſon and the law of God have put upon it, he ſame value let us allow it in our opinion, and ſhew that we allow t by our practice. Let us do nothing forbidden by God to get reputation, and let us be equally careful to do nothing evil to loſe it. When ve cannot keep both a good reputation, and a good conſcience, let us ather neglect our good name, than wound our conſcience: but where ve cannot loſe our reputation, but by our own fault, there let us be areful not to loſe it, becauſe at the ſame time we muſt alſo loſe a good onſcience. Let us provide things honeſt in the ſight of God, by abſtaining from all real evil: and let us provide things honeſt in the ſight f men alſo, by *abſtaining from all appearance of evil.*

SER-

SERMON XLII.

Evil-Appearance.

1 THESS. V. 22.

The third Sermon on this Text.

Abſtain from all Appearance of Evil.

WHAT the bounds and meaſures of the duty here enjoyn'd by the Apoſtle are; what appearance of evil is, or is not conſiſtent with the precept here given; how far it is impoſſible to *abſtain from all appearance of evil,* and by conſequence not commanded in the words of the text; how far it is poſſible, and being poſſible, is for that reaſon here requir'd; what thoſe directions are, by the due obſervance of which we may beſt abſtain from the appearance of evil, ſo as to avoid it, where it is avoidable, and to be free from guilt, where it is not avoidable, I have already explain'd, if not with all that accuracy, which ſo nice a ſubject requires, yet I hope in ſuch a manner, that none, who ſincerely deſire to know their duty in this point, can be eaſily miſtaken in it; nor any, who would conſcientiouſly diſcharge it, need to be at a loſs, how to acquit themſelves of it.

NOW tho' no other reaſon need to be given, why we ſhould be religiouſly careful to *abſtain from all appearance of evil,* beſides the poſitive command of our Apoſtle; tho' the authority of the Law-giver is a better ground for our obligation to obey this, or any other divine law, than the ſuppos'd reaſonableneſs of the law it ſelf; yet becauſe the Apoſtles did not always claim an implicit obedience to their commands, but choſe rather to work upon their diſciples by the gentler methods of argument and perſwaſion; becauſe God himſelf doth often in Scripture wave his abſolute authority, and ſubmit his laws to be examin'd by our reaſon; becauſe the laws of God, the more narrowly they are examin'd, the more wiſe, juſt, and gracious they will appear; becauſe the more ſcrupulouſly we enquire into the grounds of our duty, the more ſtrongly we ſhall be convinc'd of our ſtrict obligations to it, and, in conſequence of that conviction, the more readily diſpos'd to practiſe it; upon theſe con-

conſiderations I thought it not only allowable, but even requiſite to allege ſome reaſons, why we ought to be ſtrictly careful *in abſtaining from all appearance of evil.*

THE firſt reaſon I aſſign'd was this, becauſe by ſuch appearance of evil we ſhould hurt our reputation.

THAT our reputation is as much hurt by the appearance of evil, as by real evil, is matter of fact, and wants not to be prov'd by reaſon, being manifeſt from experience. The only queſtion here is, whether reputation be a thing worth our getting or keeping; whether, if we can anſwer it to God, and to our own conſciences, that we have done nothing truly ſinful, we need to be concern'd for the loſs of our reputation, by doing things apparently ſinful; whether a good Chriſtian ought not to be ſo mortified, as to be wholly indifferent to the eſteem of men, ſo that it would be a ſin in him rather than a duty, to do or omit any thing in order to acquire or preſerve a good name. And there is the greater room for this queſtion, becauſe ſome moraliſts have taken a great deal of pains to ſhew the emptineſs of that vain, airy, imaginary thing, or, as they chooſe to ſpeak, that mere nothing call'd reputation; nor have moraliſts only declaim'd againſt it as an inſignificant thing, but ſome divines alſo in diſcourſes, written for the advancement of piety, and for preſſing the Chriſtian duty of humility, have repreſented reputation under ſuch colours, as to make it odious rather than amiable, and ſo far from deſerving to be courted, that it ought carefully to be ſhunn'd by an humble, mortified, and ſelf-denying Chriſtian.

BUT notwithſtanding what hath been advanc'd by ſome men, more to be commended for the piety of their intention, than for the ſoundneſs of their judgment, againſt the value of reputation, and the lawfulneſs of purſuing it, I ventur'd ſo far to differ from their ſentiments, as to aſſign the regard to our reputation as one forcible motive to our *abſtaining from all appearance of evil.* Whether I had ſufficient reaſon ſo to do, you are in ſome meaſure able to judge from what hath been already ſaid, and you will be ſtill better able to determine, from what I have now farther to ſay, concerning the valuableneſs of reputation.

THAT it hath ſome real worth in it, ſo as to render it worthy our purſuit and attainment, I have argu'd from that natural averſion to ſhame, which is implanted in us. Our natures are ſo fram'd, as that we neceſſarily find a reliſh for praiſe, and a diſreliſh to diſgrace: and that this is not from the depravation of our natures, but from their original conſtitution, is evident, becauſe the more our reaſon is improv'd, the better we are educated, the leſs we are tainted with vice, the quicker and livelier this ſenſe of ſhame is; and on the other ſide, the leſs we are improv'd in reaſon, the worſe we are educated, and the more we are corrupted with ſinful habits, the more we are proof againſt diſgrace. Now this averſion being implanted in us by nature, or, to ſpeak more like a Chriſtian, by God the author and framer of our nature, muſt have been intended as a guard againſt ſin, which it no otherwiſe is, than as it is a fence againſt that ſhame which attends ſin; which ſhame attending the appearance of ſin, as well as real guilt, makes ſuch evil appearance alſo, by reaſon of that ſhame which is annex'd to it, fit to be avoided. And tho' in ſome caſes a Chriſtian is oblig'd to do ſuch actions, as are undeſervedly attended with diſgrace, yet this doth not prove that diſgrace is not an evil; becauſe in ſuch caſes the diſgrace is not choſe for its own ſake, but only to avoid a greater ſhame: ſo that diſgrace is ſtill an evil as ſuch, tho', in compariſon to a greater evil, it may be tolerable.

ANOTHER good proof, that the diſtinction between honour and diſhonour, glory and ſhame, is not imaginary, but real, and that the one is a proper object of our deſire, and the other of our averſion, may be taken from the conſideration of thoſe motives, whereby God hath been pleas'd to incite us to the obedience, and to deter us from the breach, of his laws. God hath repreſented to us the eternal happineſs, which ſhall be the portion of the bleſſed, as a ſtate of unmix'd glory, and the eternal miſery, which ſhall be the lot of the curſed, as a ſtate of the utmoſt ſhame; which he would not have done, were there nothing in glory worthy our purſuit, nothing in ſhame really terrible; or were it improper for us to be ſtirr'd up to one ſort of actions by the hopes of the former, or to be diverted from another ſort by the fears of the latter. But we need not ſearch ſo deeply into the frame of our natures, or look ſo high as to the ſanctions of God's laws, in order to prove that there is a real difference between honour and diſhonour; and that it is truly worth our while to aim at eſteem, and to guard againſt cenſure, by *abſtaining from all appearance of evil.*

WOULD men impartially judge of the value of reputation by the price which they ſet upon it, when it is either hurt or aſſaulted by others, we need not fear their having too low an opinion of its worth: their great jealouſie of its being at never ſo great diſtance attack'd, their quick and warm reſentments upon its being in the leaſt degree hurt, and the large demands they are never wanting to make for the reparation of ſuch wrongs, are ſufficient proofs, that how cheap ſoever their good name is to them in other regards, yet upon ſuch occaſions their value of it runs very high. But certainly *diverſe meaſures and diverſe weights* are not more againſt the rules of civil commerce, than theſe different valuations of one and the ſame thing are againſt the laws of moral juſtice: ſo that if we will act equally, and not make uſe of *a greater and leſs meaſure*, which in this, as well as in other inſtances, *is an abomination to the Lord*, we ſhould not exact more from our neighbour for any damage done to our reputation, than we our ſelves truly value it at; but either by patient ſuffering diſhonour, ſhew that we do not look upon reputation to be worth any thing; or by doing ſuch things as are praiſe-worthy, convince the world that we value it our ſelves at the ſame rate we would have it valued at by others.

THE price, that human laws put upon reputation, is ſtill another and a better proof of its real worth: for laws do not uſe to provide for the ſecurity of ſuch things, as are in themſelves of no value, nor look upon it as any undue invaſion of right to take away that from another, which, tho' he might have a good title to, yet, by his total neglect and dereliction of it, he ſhew'd he had no mind to keep: ſo that when detraction is by the laws made criminal, and defamation puniſh'd as injurious, it is preſum'd that a good name is what every one wiſhes to preſerve. And in all well-order'd Governments the penalty of ſlander is greater or leſs, as the party aſpers'd hath more or leſs reputation to loſe; which ſhews that the price, which the laws put upon men's repute, riſes or falls in proportion to the care, which they themſelves have taken to encreaſe or leſſen it: ſo that, unleſs we will be wiſer than the laws, and forfeit our juſt claim to their protection, what we would have fenc'd nd guarded by them, that we ſhould not raſhly give up our ſelves; but by all warrantable methods ſhould ſhew, that we have a concern for hat reputation, which we deſire the laws ſhould protect.

Nor have human laws taken more care to preſerve mens reputation
han the laws of God; the ſins, with which calumny or falſe witneſs is
orted, when it is reckon'd by our Saviour amongſt *murders, adulteries,* Matt. 15. 19.
ornications, and blaſphemies; the rank which ſlanderers and backbiters
re plac'd in, when numbered by the Apoſtle with *murderers* and *haters* Rom. 1. 30.
of God; the puniſhment threatned in the Goſpel to *revilers*, of whom as
well as *of idolaters, adulterers, abuſers of themſelves with mankind,* 1 Cor. 6,9,10.
hieves, covetous, drunkards, and *extortioners*, it is expreſsly ſaid, *that*
hey ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God; and the ſolemn declaration
of our bleſſed Saviour, that *whoſoever ſhall ſay to his brother, thou fool,* Matt. 5. 22.
hall be in danger of hell-fire, which ſevere ſentence, however ſoftned, muſt ſtill carry terrour in it againſt ſuch as load their Chriſtian brethren with unchriſtian calumnies: theſe I ſay, and other parallel threats de-nounc'd againſt thoſe, who ſhall by ſlander and detraction rob others of heir good name, are convincing proofs of the care, which God hath aken to guard mens reputation againſt the aſſaults of others, and are at he ſame time ſtrong motives to our utmoſt diligence and caution not o deſtroy, by our own ill conduct, what the wiſdom and goodneſs of od hath us'd ſuch effectual methods to preſerve.

The heinous guilt of detraction, and the ſevere puniſhments annex'd o this groſs ſin by the laws of God and man, are ſo proper arguments f the valuableneſs of reputation, that thoſe very moraliſts and divines, who take great pains to depreſs the worth of it, when they are to repreſent the folly and ſin of vain-glory, take care to exalt it as much, when they are to aggravate the miſchief and ſinfulneſs of calumny. In which procedure of theirs the piety of their intention is rather to be commended, than the prudence of their conduct: for truth, whether peculative or practical, is ſo far from wanting the ſupport of error, that always ſuffers by being made to depend upon it; and thoſe can never be firm principles of eſtabliſhing any one duty, which being once dmitted, overthrow other duties of equal moment with it: ſo that here is no need of our advancing ſuch notions in order to recommend umility or lowlineſs of mind, which, if allow'd, will leſſen the guilt of lander. Detraction cannot be a ſin of that blackneſs, which the Scriptures repreſent it to be, if reputation be worth nothing; but reputation may be worth ſomething, and yet humility be a neceſſary virue.

The more we examine this notion of the indifference of a good or bad ame, the worſe we ſhall like it; for ſo far is it from being the foundaion of any Chriſtian virtue, that it overthrows ſeveral. Our Saviour ath made it an inſtance of Chriſtian perfection, that we ſhould ſpeak well of them, who ſpeak evil of us. But why ſhould ſpeaking evil of s be a ſign of enmity, as it is here ſuppos'd to be; or ſpeaking well of thers a part of Chriſtian charity, as our Saviour hath made it, if to e ſpoken well or ill of are things wholly indifferent?

A patient ſuffering of reproach, when we are revil'd by men for keeping a good conſcience towards God, is another duty very frequenty inculcated, and very earneſtly preſs'd upon us in the Goſpel. But what occaſion is there for patience under reproach, if reproach it ſelf e no evil? What merit is there in ſuffering what we are not at all averſe

to?

to? Or how indeed can we with any propriety of ſpeech be ſaid to ſuffer what is in it ſelf no way grievous?

Acts 5. 41. WE find in the *Acts*, that the Apoſtles *rejoyc'd that they were counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for Chriſt's name.* It was an honour for them to ſuffer in ſo good a cauſe, but ſtill they ſuffer'd; they *rejoyc'd that they ſuffer'd ſhame for Chriſt's name,* which implies that there was need of ſuch a motive to make it ſufferable; but were ſhame not at all grievous to human nature, there had then been no honour in ſuffering it for Chriſt's ſake, and conſequently no ground for the Apoſtles *rejoycing that they were counted worthy to ſuffer.*

OUR Saviour is ſo far from confounding the diſtinctions betwixt honour and diſhonour, reputation and diſgrace, that when by way of parable he warns his diſciples to be aware of pride, and exhorts them to lowlineſs of mind, he lays hold of that fear of ſhame, which is natural to us, to prove the folly of ambition, and makes the deſire of glory a motive to humility. The perſon bidden to a wedding is caution'd againſt taking the higheſt room, leſt he ſhould with ſhame be thruſt down to a lower; and is adviſ'd to ſit down in the loweſt, that he might have worſhip in the preſence of the gueſts, when he came to be advanc'd higher:
Luke 14. 11. and it is laid down as a general aphoriſm, that *whoſoever exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.* Now if eſteem and diſeſteem, honour and diſgrace, were in themſelves indifferent, the force of our Saviour's argument would be quite broken; ſince we need not fear exalting our ſelves, if there were no harm in being abas'd; nor care to humble our ſelves, if there were no good in being exalted.

THOSE who are ſo refin'd in their ſpeculations, as to aſſert that ſhame is only an imaginary evil, and that infamy hath nothing in it really ſhocking to human nature, muſt ſurely have forgot the hiſtory of Chriſt's ſufferings, of which the deſpight and contempt, with which he was treated, ſeem to have made the moſt bitter and afflictive part; the loading him with the ſcandalous imputations of being a blaſphemer, a factious teacher, an incendiary, a fellow who was found perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay tribute to *Ceſar*; the unanimous poſtponing him to a notorious thief, rebel, and murderer, as one whom they would have to be accounted a more execrable wretch than *Barabbas* was: the pageantry of a mock-coronation, inveſting him with a purple robe, putting a reed inſtead of a ſcepter into his hands, and placing a crown of thorns upon his head; the mockery of bowing the knee before him, and ſaying in deriſion, *Hail king of the Jews*; the inſolence of ſpitting in his face, blind-folding him, buffeting him, and ſaying in their brutal raillery, *Propheſie unto us, thou Chriſt, who is he that ſmote thee?* The leading him away in triumph to the place of execution, and there crucifying him betwixt two thieves; the ſcurrility of thoſe, who paſt by, reviling him, wagging their heads, and calling upon him ſarcaſtically to make good his boaſts, to exert his pretended power, to ſhew himſelf the king of Iſrael, the Son of God, and a Saviour of others, by coming down from the croſs and ſaving himſelf; the caſting this in his teeth by one of the malefactors who was crucified with him, and rail'd on him, ſaying, *if thou be that Chriſt, ſave thy ſelf and us*; theſe, I ſay, and other circumſtances of this nature, recorded in the Goſpel, and ſpecified with a more than uſual particularity, do plainly ſhew, that ſhame was the moſt predominant ingredient of that bitter cup, which our Saviour drank for our ſins, even the very dregs of the cup of God's fury.

Now

Now had ignominy ſo great a ſhare in our Saviour's meritorious paſ-
ion, and is it an evil only in imagination? Was our Saviour forc'd to
ook up to the joy that was ſet before him, that he might thereby be en- Heb. 12. 2.
bled to *deſpiſe the ſhame,* and is ſhame a thing in it ſelf altogether in-
ifferent? Was Chriſt in a more than ordinary manner ſupported, that
e might bear reproach, and is diſgrace after all a mere notional evil,
urely of our own making? Thoſe, who advance ſuch novel and un-
outh notions as theſe, whatever ſervice they may deſign to Religion,
roceed upon principles, which, as they have no foundation in reaſon,
neither have they any countenance from the Goſpel, do no way pro-
ote true piety, but tend to the overthrow of ſeveral duties enjoyn'd
holy Writ; and directly contradict thoſe expreſs precepts of Scripture,
hich require us to *provide things honeſt,* or, as the original word im- Rom. 12. 17.
orts, beautiful and honourable *in the ſight of men*; to *exerciſe our ſelves* Acts. 24. 16.
have a conſcience void of offence towards men as well as towards
od; to *think of ſuch things as are of good report, and worthy of praiſe*; Philip. 4. 8.
be blameleſs as well as harmleſs, the ſons of God without rebuke; to c. 2. 15.
ke care that we be not deſpis'd; to leave no ſtain on our honour, but
have a tender regard to our *good name, as a thing which is better* Eccleſ. 7. 1.
han precious ointment, is rather to be choſen than great riches, ſhall Prov. 22. 1.
ntinue with us above a thouſand great treaſures of gold, and ſhall out- Ecclus. 41. 12, 13.
ve even virtue it ſelf; ſince *a good life hath but few days, but a good*
ame ſhall endure for ever.

It was the proſpect of this durable glory, which made the bleſſed
irgin break out into holy raptures, and, in the depth of her humility,
expreſs an extraordinary joy for the glad tidings of her exaltation.
er *ſoul magnified the Lord, and her ſpirit rejoyc'd in God her Saviour,* Luke 1. 46.
ecauſe he had regarded the low eſtate of his hand-maiden, and becauſe
om thenceforth all generations ſhould call her bleſſed. Nor did our
aviour beſtow an empty, imaginary bleſſing on the other *Mary,* when,
recompence for the good work ſhe had wrought upon him, he gra-
ouſly promis'd, that *whereſoever his Goſpel ſhould be preach'd through-* Mark 14. 9.
t the whole world, there alſo what ſhe had done ſhould be ſpoken of
r a memorial of her.

These two inſtances of the bleſſed Virgin and the other *Mary* ma-
ifeſtly prove, that the notion even of a poſthumous reputation, or a
ood name after death, is not ſo mere a notion, but that there is ſome-
ing of a real and valuable bleſſing implied in it. The bleſſed Virgin
agnifies the Lord, and her ſpirit rejoyceth in God her Saviour. It muſt
e ſome real benefit for which *ſhe thus magnifies God,* and it muſt be a
aluable bleſſing, which was the object of this extraordinary joy. When
e comes to acknowledge the benefit which ſhe had receiv'd, and to
oint out the diſtinguiſhing mercy which deſerv'd her thankſgiving,
nd occaſion'd her joy, the mercy pointed at is this, *that from thence-*
orth all generations ſhall call her bleſſed. Unleſs therefore we will af-
irm, that the holy Virgin pleas'd her ſelf with a mere phantom, that
e was too laviſh of her praiſes, and magnified God for nothing; un-
eſs we will accuſe her of vanity in entertaining her fancy with the pro-
ſpect of an imaginary bleſſing, which had no other value in it than
hat it ow'd to her miſtaken opinion, we muſt own, that there is ſome
eal good in being mention'd with honour, even after we are dead, and
n being ſpoken well of by all ſucceeding generations.

But could we without irreverence ſuppoſe, that the Virgin deluded her ſelf with hopes of a mere imaginary good; yet we cannot without blaſphemy think, that our bleſſed Saviour deluded the other *Mary* with the promiſe of an imaginary bleſſing, at that very time, when he gave ſuch an emphatical commendation of the good work which ſhe had wrought, and allotted this as a proper reward of it, that the memorial of it ſhould be ſpread as far and as wide as the Goſpel. A noble reward this! and over-proportion'd, as all the rewards of God are, to the work done, according to the notions of Scripture, which teach us that *a good name is better than precious oyntment*; but a very ſcanty recompence, and which fell much ſhort of the good work wrought by her, if with this precious oyntment, *which might have been ſold for much*, ſhe purchas'd nothing, but a vain, empty, imaginary phantom.

It is very well known, that as inſignificant a thing as fame and glory is in the opinion of ſome ſpeculative writers, the deſire of it hath been one of the ſtrongeſt motives, which hath ſtirr'd up men no ways inferior to them in wiſdom, or in juſtneſs of thought, to the performance of the moſt virtuous and praiſe-worthy actions; and we ſhould not, methinks, be over-eager to run down a principle, which, whether it can it ſelf be well ſupported or not, hath been in many countries, and for many ages, the principal, if not the only ſupport of virtue.

If we enquire of the Heathen, what was the main ſpring of thoſe laudable actions, by which they ſignaliz'd themſelves, adorn'd the ages they liv'd in, and conſulted the good of poſterity, they openly profeſs to us, that they neither expected, nor deſir'd any other reward of the labours which they underwent, or of the dangers which they hazarded, but that of praiſe and glory; that, if this recompence were not held forth to them, they could ſee no reaſon, why, in this narrow and ſhort courſe of life, they ſhould waſte themſelves with ſo many cares, and expoſe themſelves to ſo many hazards: that if they had no preſages of what was to come, if all their thoughts were circumſcrib'd within the compaſs of one age, they would never break themſelves with unwearied cares, nor wear out their lives in endleſs labours for the good of their country; but that there was in every good, in every great, in every publick-ſpirited man a natural thirſt after glory; that this, night and day, whetted their induſtry, and ſummon'd them to exert all their faculties; that by this they were conſtantly admoniſh'd, that their memory was not to be terminated with their lives, but would be of the ſame extent with eternity; that if ſome great men had thought it worth their while to leave behind them ſtatues and images to repreſent the ſhape and make of their bodies, more exalted ſpirits might well think it much more worth their while to leave behind them well-wrought patterns of their virtues, and finiſh'd pictures of their very ſouls; that therefore, whenever they ſet about any thing, this thought ſhould be always preſent to their minds, that what they were now doing ſhould be view'd, examin'd, and, if well-done, applauded, not by the men of one country or of one age, but by the univerſal ſuffrage of all men of all countries throughout all ſucceeding generations; that therefore, whether after death they ſhould have any knowledge of what ſentence ſhould be paſt upon them or not, it was however a ſufficient encouragement to virtue, that they were at preſent entertain'd with the thoughts and hopes of having the memory of their good actions faithfully tranſmitted to poſterity.

THESE were the principles, which in ſome meaſure ſupplied the want of revelation, before *life and immortality were brought to light by the Goſpel*; to theſe principles we owe the learned writings of their contemplative, and the glorious exploits of their active men; to theſe we owe thoſe excellent rules of living which they have left us in their books, and thoſe noble patterns which they have ſet us in their examples; nay, to theſe very principles we owe all thoſe fine ſayings, which were firſt vented by the ancients, and have ſince been tranſcrib'd by the moderns, concerning the contempt of glory. For it hath been with great ſtrength of judgment, and liveline ſs of wit obſerv'd by a celebrated writer, that thoſe philoſophers, who wrote upon this topick, took ſpecial care to prefix their names to thoſe very books, which they wrote concerning the emptineſs of glory, as being willing to ſecure themſelves a laſting fame by what they ſaid ſo elegantly to expoſe the worthleſsneſs of reputation.

I WOULD not be thought to ſubſtitute this principle in the room of thoſe ſtronger motives to an holy and virtuous life, which are propos'd in the Goſpel: God forbid, that I ſhould ſo much as compare this expectation of a good name after death with that more exceeding weight of glory, which the Scriptures have made the recompence of holineſs: but as we may lay no other foundations, than the Scriptures have laid; ſo we need not fear to build upon thoſe which are laid in the Scriptures. It is plain by the conſtant tenor of holy Writ, that there are incomparably greater rewards reſerv'd for the godly, and greater curſes kept in ſtore for ſinners, than their being remembred with honour or infamy: but ſtill it is repreſented in Scripture, as one conſiderable part of the juſt man's recompence, that *his memory ſhall be bleſſed*, and of the wicked man's puniſhment, that *his name ſhall rot*.

Prov. 10. 7.

NOW if a good name comes not too late, even after death; if ſhame comes too ſoon, tho' it reaches us not before we are gone down into our graves; if the Scriptures have repreſented to us the one as a bleſſing, and the other as a curſe, even then, when we are not aſſur'd that we ſhall have any perception of either; much more muſt that good reputation, which cloſely follows our good actions, ſo that we plainly taſte and feel the pleaſure of it, be a valuable good; and that ſhame, which immediately attends upon our evil actions, ſo that we at preſent ſmart under the pain of it, be acknowledg'd to be a miſchief fit, by all due methods, to be avoided.

THE ſumm of what hath been deliver'd is this: the deſire of a good name, and the fear of diſgrace are natural to us; that we are pleas'd with the one, and diſturb'd with the other, is not from choice, but inſtinct; theſe impreſſions were wrought in our ſouls by the author of our being, and are not to be over-rul'd, but to be rightly directed; they are then directed aright, when we are mov'd thereby to ſeek honour by actions truly honourable, and to avoid ſhame by any thing, either really or even in appearance, ſinful; theſe propenſions are conſtantly and ſteadily to be obey'd; the greateſt honour is always to be purſu'd, and the greateſt ſhame is always to be avoided: the intereſts of virtue and of Religion are beſt ſecur'd by acting up to theſe principles, ſince virtue will, in the iſſue, procure us the moſt laſting honour; and ſin will, in the laſt reſult, expoſe us to the greateſt ſhame: the exceſſes therefore of ambition and vain-glory do not proceed from our valuing honour too much, but from our being miſtaken wherein our true honour conſiſts.

The laws of God and men ſet an high price upon reputation, by annexing ſevere penalties on all injuries done to it; which are a proof of its being truly and highly valuable: the tenderneſs we expreſs for our reputation, when it is really or ſeemingly hurt by others, is an evidence of the regard we naturally have for it, and a reaſon why we ſhould not be prodigal of it our ſelves; the deſire of it is in it ſelf prejudicial to no one Chriſtian duty, and the neglect of it is deſtructive of ſeveral. The Scripture doth require us to uſe all lawful means to gain and preſerve it; thoſe, who are propos'd as the moſt exact patterns of holy living, have expreſs'd a great regard to it: reputation therefore is, for theſe reaſons, to be valued and ſought after; and whatever may hurt our reputation is, for the ſame reaſons, carefully to be avoided.

THERE may indeed be danger of our being too covetous of reputation, but there is alſo danger of being too laviſh of it. If we deſire to be eſteem'd by men for qualities, which belong not to us, or which are not worthy of eſteem, or which do not deſerve all that eſteem we claim; if we are inſatiable or immoderate in our thirſt after fame; if we ſet a greater value upon it than it deſerves; if we prefer it to virtue, and to a good conſcience; if we uſe indirect means to compaſs it; if we are too much dejected when we fall ſhort of it, or too much elevated with it; if our diligence is ſlackned, or our vanity is fed, by our having gain'd it; if we acquieſce in it as our chief aim and ſovereign good, which we love *with all our ſtrength, with all our mind, and with all our ſoul*; if we uſe it to bad, or make no uſe of it to good ends; ſuch a deſire of reputation as this, is indeed dangerous and criminal: but if we regulate our purſuit of it by thoſe meaſures, which right reaſon and divine revelation preſcribe; if we never do any thing ſinful to gain it, and reſolutely perform our duty, even when we are ſure thereby to leſſen it; if we take care to deſerve it by the open appearance of thoſe virtues, which we inwardly and conſcientiouſly practiſe; if we are tender of its being hurt by any falſe ſhew of vice, which our own hearts do ſincerely acquit us of; if we can bear it without being lifted up, and be diſappointed of it without being caſt down; if, when we have got it, we make uſe of it to the glory of God, to the edification of our neighbours, and to the quickening our ſelves in a vigorous performance of all laudable actions; a regard for reputation, ſpringing from theſe principles, bounded within theſe limits, and directed to theſe holy purpoſes, is the duty and ornament of every ſincere Chriſtian.

TO ſhut up all in a word; we ſhall, I think acquit our ſelves in this point as good Chriſtians, if we deſpiſe reputation ſo far, as to do no ill thing to gain it; and on the other ſide value it ſo far, as to do nothing really or apparently ſinful to forfeit it.

SERMON XLIII.

Evil-Appearance.

1 Theſs. V. 22.

Abſtain from all Appearance of Evil.

The fourth Sermon on this Text.

OUR failure of obedience to the laws of God generally proceeds from one or other of theſe ſources: ſometimes we have looſe and indiſtinct notions of our duty; we do not know the preciſe meaſures and bounds of it; we think more or leſs requir'd at our hands, than really is; and, for want of a right knowledge of its due compaſs and extent, either, on the one ſide, conclude it utterly impracticable, and therefore out of deſpondency never ſet about it; or, on the other ſide, think it much eaſier than it is, and therefore go about it after ſuch a lazy and perfunctory manner, that we never diſcharge it as we ought. Sometimes we are well enough acquainted with the true meaſures and limits of our duty; are able to form in our own minds clear and diſtinct perceptions of it; know the preciſe points, whereby it is bounded and ſhut up; but then, for want of ſome rules and directions for the practice of it, we are at a loſs how to go about it; ſo that tho' we plainly perceive what is to be done by us, yet we fail in the performance, becauſe we do not perceive how it is to be done. Sometimes we both know our duty, and are furniſh'd with rules and directions for the performance of it; we know the end we ought to aim at, and the means whereby we may attain that end; but having not enquir'd into the reaſons and grounds of our duty, we are not ſufficiently convinc'd of its expedience, or neceſſity; we have ſome looſe general notions, that ſuch a thing is requir'd of us, but having never examin'd why it is requir'd, when we come to practiſe it, we begin to doubt whether it is ſo abſolutely requiſite, as we imagin'd; and becauſe the reaſons of its being neceſſary are not at hand, we are too apt to think it of no great weight and moment, and conſequently to diſpenſe with our ſelves for the omiſſion of it.

Now that we might not, upon any of theſe occaſions, fail in our performance of the duty enjoyn'd by the Apoſtle in the words of my text, I thought it proper to ſhew you

I. What the duty here commanded is.
II. How it may be compaſs'd.
III. Why we are oblig'd to it.

What the duty here commanded is, I open'd unto you by ſettling its true meaſures and bounds, beyond which it doth not extend, and ſhort of which it ought not to be reſtrain'd.

How this duty might be perform'd, I inſtructed you by ſome plain rules and directions laid down for the avoiding all appearance of evil.

Lastly, why we are oblig'd to this duty, I ſhew'd to you by aſſigning ſome reaſons for our abſtaining from all appearance of evil. The firſt reaſon alleg'd was, becauſe by ſuch appearance of evil we ſhould hurt our reputation; which reaſon I was forc'd to dwell the longer upon, becauſe of the doubts that have been rais'd, by ſome devout and contemplative men, concerning the lawfulneſs of our doing any thing in order to acquire, or to preſerve our reputation. I will not repeat any thing that hath been already ſaid with too much prolixity on this ſubject; but ſhall preſume you ſufficiently ſatisfied of the main truth I endeavour'd to prove, to wit, that a good and ſincere Chriſtian, tho' he ought to deſpiſe reputation ſo far as to do no evil thing to gain it; yet on the other ſide, he ought to value it ſo much as to do nothing really or apparently ſinful to forfeit it.

I did not enlarge upon any of the ill effects of loſing our reputation by the appearance of evil, ſuch as are the ſcandal we may thereby give to others; the danger of our being led on from doing things ſeemingly evil to doing other things notoriouſly ſinful, and the diſhonour we may hereby bring upon our holy profeſſion; becauſe theſe are diſtinct reaſons, which may be aſſign'd for our abſtaining from all appearance of evil, which remain to be farther proſecuted. I proceed therefore to the

Second Reason that may be alleg'd for our abſtaining from all appearance of evil, namely, becauſe it may tempt others to ſin.

What I before obſerv'd concerning the loſs of our reputation by the appearance of evil, that it ſuffer'd as much by apparent as by real guilt, is as true concerning the hurt thereby done to others. For as men have no other meaſures to judge by than outward appearance, and therefore muſt neceſſarily judge of us according to what we openly appear, and not according to what we inwardly are; ſo, in the imitation of our actions, they have no other copy to tranſcribe from, than that which is plac'd before their view, according to that light in which it appears to them: ſo that if the actions, which they propoſe to themſelves as patterns, appear ſinful, thoſe actions, which they are prevail'd with by ſuch examples to imitate, will be ſinful alſo. There is this difference between actions notoriouſly ſinful, and actions evil only in appearance, that the former being in themſelves evil, and being always evil, are more likely to appear evil to all or moſt of thoſe who ſhall obſerve them, and conſequently to ſpread their infection farther; whereas actions truly and at the bottom good, but only of an evil aſpect and ſuſpicious countenance, will not be in ſo great danger of being thought evil of and ſpoke

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evil of by wiſe and good-natur'd men, as by thoſe who are thro' ignorance diſpos'd to miſtake them, or thro' malice inclin'd to miſconſtrue them. But ſince, as hath before been prov'd, we are oblig'd not only o recommend our actions to the favourable opinion of the few good nd wiſe, but to order them ſo as to give no offence to the moſt ignorant and malicious, actions ſeemingly evil are like to be miſchievous, ho' not in an equal degree with thoſe that are manifeſtly wicked, yet n ſuch a degree as to render them deſtructive of the ſouls of our brethren, and conſequently not to be ventur'd on without endangering our own.

Men ſpeak to each other by their actions, as well as by their words. As there is a language of our looks, as well as of our tongues; ſo alſo s there a kind of language in what we do in the ſight of each other, as vell as in what we ſay in the hearing of each other. As therefore we nay exhort men to virtue by wholſom advice, and tempt them to ſin y pernicious counſels; ſo alſo may we provoke them to virtuous actions y ſetting before them a good pattern, and tempt them to ſinful practices by the contagion of a bad example. But as in words, ſo alſo in ctions, there may be a double meaning: ſometimes, in the counſels we ive, we expreſs our ſelves ſo clearly and diſtinctly, that there is no ikelihood or even poſſibility of our being miſtaken; thoſe, who hear vhat we ſay, cannot be at a loſs to know, whether we exhort them to vhat is good, or perſwade them to what is evil: there is no ambiguity in the words we uſe, and conſequently no room for error, or miſconſtruction. But it is poſſible alſo for us to cloath our advice in ſuch mbiguous terms, as tho' they are capable of a good, are alſo capable of n evil meaning, and then, what was by us meant well, or at leaſt not l, may by thoſe, to whom we addreſs our ſelves, happen to be conſtrued in a wrong ſenſe; ſo that for want of our expreſſing our ſelves learly, they may ſo miſunderſtand our counſels, as to be ſeduc'd by them nto ſinful and unwarrantable practices. And the ſame thing happens n the language of our actions; theſe may be perform'd after ſuch a manner, they may be ſet forth in ſuch clear and diſtinct colours, that it is carce poſſible for thoſe who obſerve them to miſtake or miſconſtrue them; they may without danger of error readily pronounce whether hey are innocent, or criminal, and conſequently of good or bad example. But it is poſſible alſo, and, without great care and caution, it is uſual for us, ſo to order our actions, that, by reaſon of the different lights hey may be view'd in, the different appearances they are capable of, nd the different principles they may be ſuppos'd to ſpring from, thoſe, who take notice of them, may not be able to determine whether they re good or evil, and therefore may rank them among forbidden ones, tho' in themſelves they are innocent; and conſequently thro' this ambiguity of them, which we took no care to prevent, may be miſled by them into the perpetration of known ſins.

Now as that man, who, in the advice he gives to another, ſhould expreſs himſelf ſo looſely and careleſly, as if it were indifferent to him, whether his counſel were taken in a right or wrong ſenſe, and whether his friend were advantag'd or hurt by it, would be anſwerable for that damage done to him, which, tho' he foreſaw, he took no care to hinder; ſo in the example we ſet to others by the actions, which fall within their obſervance and cogniſance, if we perform them after ſuch a careleſs and perfunctory manner, as to be wholly unconcern'd, whether a right or wrong conſtruction be put upon them, whether they tend to the edification or corruption of our brethren, we ſhall in the ſight of God be juſtly chargeable with that miſchief done to our brother's ſoul, which tho' we were plainly forewarn'd of, we took no care to fore-arm him againſt.

In Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory we read, that the firſt Chriſtians made no difficulty at all of ſaluting the ſtatues of their Emperors, which were plac'd in the corners of the ſtreets, tho' they refus'd to pay the ſame reſpect to the images, which were plac'd in the temples of the heathen Gods: for they look'd upon the firſt of theſe actions merely as a civil reſpect, which ſubjects ow'd to their Prince; but upon the latter as a formal act of idolatry, to be ſhunn'd and abhorr'd by all true Chriſtians. *Julian* the Apoſtate, to perplex them, thought of this artifice; he order'd the ſtatue of an heathen God to be plac'd near his own, that if the Chriſtians ſaluted his ſtatue, as they had formerly done, it might be ſaid and thought, that at the ſame time they ſaluted that of the falſe God, which ſtood near it; but if they refus'd to do it, he might then have a plauſible pretence to puniſh them, as people who refus'd to pay their Prince an honour, which they could not deny to be his due, and which they had ſometimes paid him, without wounding their conſciences. The Chriſtians choſe rather to lay themſelves open to this laſt accuſation, tho' never ſo unjuſt, than to give the leaſt ſuſpicion that they worſhipp'd idols. Reverence paid towards the ſtatues which ſtood together, might be directed only to that of their Prince, and being an inſtance of civil reſpect, might in that regard be, and by equal judges be thought, innocent: but the ſame outward act might alſo be interpreted, and by the miſtake of thoſe who obſerv'd it, and the malice of him who exacted it, was more likely to be judg'd, an act of religious worſhip, and was therefore, to prevent the ſcandal that might ariſe from the appearance of evil, with good reaſon forborn, as having the ſemblance, and therefore ſharing in the guilt, of idolatry. No one, I believe, will doubt, but the Chriſtians were juſtly commendable for the omitting of an action, which, tho' capable of a good meaning, was liable alſo to a bad ſenſe; and which, becauſe it could not be done without danger of defiling the conſciences of others, muſt thereby have polluted their own.

All modeſt and well-bred perſons are ſtrictly careful to guard their words and expreſſions againſt the ſuſpicion of an evil meaning, and would preſently be out of countenance, if their hearers ſhould find room to underſtand them in ſuch a ſenſe, as border'd upon the leaſt indecency or impurity; how much more ſhould all virtuous and religious ſouls be nicely ſollicitous to fence their actions againſt the ſame evil ſuſpicion? And how much greater reaſon have they to be afraid, leſt they give any occaſion to have theſe underſtood in ſuch a ſenſe, as may corrupt the manners, and taint the conſciences, of thoſe who miſapprehend them? Equivocations in language are contrary, not only to the rules of good writing, but alſo to the precepts of common honeſty: the rhetoricians condemn them, as inconſiſtent with purity of ſtyle, and the moraliſts cenſure them, as incompatible with purity of manners: the *Romiſh* Caſuiſts are by all our, and by ſome of their own divines, very juſtly expos'd for what they have wrote in defence of them: and the principle, upon which equivocations in aſſertions, promiſes, and oaths are condemn'd, is this, that they are not conſiſtent with the laws of veracity, but are only diſguis'd lies. For tho' what is ſaid be in ſome ſenſe true,

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yet in another ſenſe it is falſe; tho' it be true in the ſenſe of the ſpeaker, yet it is falſe in the ſenſe of the hearer: whereas words ought to be ſo form'd, as to be true in that ſenſe, in which it is moſt likely they will be underſtood by the hearer. Now we have obſerv'd, that there is an equivocation, if I may ſo ſpeak, in acting, as well as in ſpeaking; our deeds are as capable as our words of a double conſtruction; and this ſort of equivocation is as much againſt the laws of Chriſtian ſimplicity, as the other is againſt the dictates of veracity. An injury is done by an equivocal aſſertion, becauſe our neighbour is thereby miſled into an erroneous opinion; and a worſe injury is done by an ambiguous action, becauſe our brother is thereby miſled into ſinful practices. It is no ſufficient excuſe for an equivocal ſpeaker to plead, that what he aſſerts is true in his own ſenſe, and that it is the hearer's fault, who puts a wrong conſtruction on his words; ſince in juſtice he ought to have guarded his words againſt ſuch wrong conſtruction; and it is no better plea for him, whoſe actions carry with them the appearance of evil, to allege, that what he did was in his own intention innocent, and that it is the obſerver's fault, who puts a wrong meaning on his actions; ſince, in charity to his brethren, he ought to have fenc'd his actions againſt the danger of being perverted.

It was the artifice of the devil, before his oracles were ſilenc'd by the coming of Chriſt, to delude his unhappy votaries by intricate and ambiguous reſponſes. When he was conſulted by a prince or ſtate concerning the event of a war, upon which the welfare and the very being of their ſtate depended, his anſwer was generally given in ſuch doubtful terms, that, according to the different interpretations of which it was equally capable, it might be underſtood either to promiſe victory, or to threaten a defeat: the enquirers, who were always willing to take it in the moſt favourable ſenſe, ventur'd upon the action; and were too often convinc'd by experience, that, by following the perplex'd counſels of ſo unfaithful a guide, they were betray'd into inevitable ruin. And ſurely it becomes not the ſimplicity of a Chriſtian to give as falſe a light, and as dangerous directions, to thoſe who are diſpos'd to follow his example, by doubtful and ſuſpicious actions, as the devil did to his conſulters by deceitful and ambiguous anſwers. Thoſe, who propoſe ſuch an one as a pattern, and form their lives by his model, may perhaps be willing to conſtrue his actions in ſuch a ſenſe, as moſt favours their luſts, and gives moſt countenance to their vices: but if an occaſion ſhall hereby be given to their ruin; if, by following ſuch uncertain directions, they ſhall be betray'd to their everlaſting perdition; tho' their deſtruction be of themſelves, yet a great ſhare of the guilt of it ſhall redound upon the heads of ſuch treacherous and unfaithful guides.

If it were permitted to a good Chriſtian to be indifferent about the ſalvation of others, if he were requir'd only to work out his own, without any concern for that of his brethren; there would be leſs occaſion of thus fencing and guarding our actions againſt the miſchief, and prejudice they may do by the appearance of evil. Upon this ſuppoſition, we might do every thing which appear'd fit and reaſonable to us, without putting our ſelves to any pain about the conſtruction, which others may paſs upon it. But who among us hath ſo ill learn'd Chriſt, or is ſo little inſtructed in the firſt elements of the Goſpel, as not to be aware, that he ought to be as careful for his neighbour's ſalvation, as his own; that, on the one ſide, he ought to exert his utmoſt power to do every thing that may advance it; and that, on the other ſide, he ought to watch with all poſſible care againſt doing any thing, that may in the leaſt hinder it? That charity obliges him, when his brother is faln, to make haſte to raiſe him; and that the ſame charity much more ſtrictly obliges him to lay nothing in his brother's way, that may be to him an occaſion of falling? No one is ignorant of that law of *Moſes*, whereby the people of *Iſrael* Deut. 22. 1. were requir'd, *when they ſaw their brother's ox, or his ſheep go aſtray, not to hide themſelves from them, but in any caſe to bring them again* v. 4. *to their brother*; as alſo, *if they ſaw their brother's ox, or his aſs faln down by the way*, they were commanded *not to hide themſelves from them, but to help their brother to lift him up again.* This may be, as it often is, applied to the reſcuing of our brethren from a ſtate of ſin and perdition, by ſeaſonable advice and brotherly admonition. But it is very obſervable, that the Law not only provided a remedy of this evil, when it ſhould happen to their brother's ox or aſs, but for the prevention of it, that it might not happen: the people of *Iſrael* were enjoyn'd, not only to help up their brother's aſs or ox, when he was faln down by the way, but to take care to hinder them from falling. For ſo we read *Exod.* 21. 33. *That if a man ſhall open a pit, or if a man ſhall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an aſs fall therein: the owner of the pit ſhall make it good.* Now what the Apoſtle ſaith in another caſe, we may 1 Cor. 9.9,10. certainly apply to this, *Doth God take care for oxen, or ſaith he it altogether for our ſakes? For our ſakes, no doubt, this is written*, that as a *Jew*, when he ſunk a pit for the ſervice of his houſe and grounds, was allow'd indeed to make it, but for fear his neighbour's beaſt ſhould fall into it, and be drown'd, was bound by the law to provide a ſufficient cover for it; ſo we, when we enter upon any action in it ſelf innocent and fit to be done, ſhould do it in ſuch a manner, and ſo cover it againſt the ſuſpicions of evil, that it may not, thro' our default, be an occaſion of our brother's ruin.

But we need not ſpell out this duty in the figures and allegories of the Law, which is ſo plainly deliver'd to us in the expreſs letter of the Matt. 18. 7. Goſpel. *Wo unto the world*, ſaith our Saviour, *becauſe of offences: for it muſt needs be that offences come, but wo to that man, by whom the offence cometh.* I need not tell you, that by offences here are not meant ſins only, but ſcandalous actions; that the *Greek* word, which we render ſometimes offence, ſometimes ſcandal, in its proper and literal ſenſe ſignifies ſomething laid in the way of another, which, thro' his inadvertency, occaſions his ſtumbling, or falling; that as holineſs is commonly repreſented to us under the notion of a courſe, a progreſs, or walking; as the precepts of the law are call'd the ways wherein we walk, and good works the ſteps or advances we make towards heaven; ſo ſins are call'd ſlips, ſtumblings, and falls; and that therefore it was natural to give the name of ſcandal, offence, ſtumbling-block, occaſion to fall, an occaſion of ſtumbling, to every ſuch either ſinful, or apparently ſinful action, which might lead others to commit ſin.

Now when our Saviour tells us, *it muſt needs be that offences come*, we muſt not underſtand this of a phyſical, abſolute, and fatal neceſſity; for it doth not ſeem conſiſtent with the juſtice of God, much leſs with the tender mercies of our Saviour to pronounce a wo againſt doing, what was unavoidably and neceſſarily to be done: but men being free agents, and left to their own liberty; being often deſtitute of prudence and charity, and therefore likely to give offence; being blinded with ignorance

and

nd malice, and therefore likely to take offence, there was a moral neceſſity that offences ſhould come. The neceſſity of their coming was ſo reat, that men ought to be upon their guard againſt they came; but it was not ſo great, as to excuſe thoſe by whom they ſhould come. For fter our Saviour had ſhewn, that there was ground for the *wo* denounc'd *o the world by reaſon of offences*, becauſe they neceſſarily would come; hat this neceſſity might not be caught hold of as a plea to excuſe them, e repeats this wo, and determines this commination to him, *by whom he offence cometh.* Whether therefore this offence cometh by an action eally ſinful, which is always ſcandalous, or by an action ſinful in appearance, which is often ſcandalous, he, by whom it cometh, that is, y whoſe fault it cometh, is within the reach of the wo here threatned y our Saviour. For that we may not think only notorious ſins compris'd under the name of offences, and that none ſhall be condemn'd for iving offence, but workers of down-right iniquity, our Saviour, in his xplication of the parable of the tares and wheat, ſeems to diſtinguiſh the ſcandalous from the ſinners, but at the ſame time plainly concludes them oth under the ſame condemnation. *The Son of man ſhall ſend forth* Matt. 13.41. *is Angels, and they ſhall gather out of his kingdom all that offend, and hem which do iniquity, and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire: there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth.* The offenders, as well as thoſe hat do iniquity, are reckon'd amongſt the tares, the children of the wicked one; theſe are deſtructive to the good ſeed; theſe by their evil eighbourhood ſpoil and hurt the wheat, with which they grow; and heſe therefore at the harveſt ſhall be bound in bundles to be burnt, and ſhall be partakers of the wo threatned to all thoſe, by whom offences ome.

THIS threatning of our Saviour is ſo plac'd indeed, as if it belong'd only to thoſe who gave offence to the weak or little ones; for in the verſe immediately preceding this threat, we find our Saviour thus addreſſing himſelf to his diſciples: *Whoſo ſhall offend one of theſe little* Matt. 18.6. *ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a milſtone were hang'd about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the ſea.* And after the denunciation of this wo, and direction to them to avoid it by all poſſible means, even by cutting off the offending hand, and plucking out the offending eye, he ſubjoyns, *take heed that ye deſpiſe* v. 10. *not one of theſe little ones*, and ſhuts up his diſcourſe with this declaration, *it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one* v. 14. *of theſe little ones ſhould periſh.* Hence it is that the ſchools, and, from them, all other caſuiſts have diſtinguiſh'd between the ſcandal that ariſes from the ignorance or infirmity, and that which ariſes from the malice, of thoſe who take offence; between the ſcandal of the weak or little ones, and the ſcandal of the *Phariſees*; and have laid it down as a ſafe rule, that tho' we are oblig'd to uſe all poſſible care not to give offence to the weak or ignorant, yet we are not under any ſuch reſtraints in regard to the perverſe and malicious. And there may ſeem to be very probable grounds for this diſtinction, not only from our Saviour's applying the general wo denounc'd againſt thoſe, by whom offences come, to the particular caſe of thoſe who ſhall offend any of the little ones, but alſo from the Epiſtles of St. *Paul*, who ſo often and ſo largely inſiſts upon the obligation, which all Chriſtians are under, to abridge their Chriſtian liberty in the uſe of things otherwiſe indifferent, for fear of offending or ſcandalizing their weak brethren. Thus we read *Rom.* 15.1. *We that are ſtrong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not* *to pleaſe our ſelves.* And ſo again, 1 *Cor.* 8. 9, 10, 11, 12. *Take heed, leſt by any means this liberty of yours become a ſtumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any man ſee thee, which haſt knowledge, ſit at meat in the idol's temple, ſhall not the conſcience of him which is weak be emboldned to eat thoſe things which are offer'd to idols? And thro' thy knowledge ſhall the weak brother periſh, for whom Chriſt died. But when ye ſin ſo againſt the brethren, and wound their weak conſcience, ye ſin againſt Chriſt.* And in general, wherever St. *Paul* preſſes this duty of taking care not to offend our brethren by the abuſe of our Chriſtian liberty, it will perhaps be found, that the brethren, for whoſe ſafety from the hurt that may be done to them by a ſcandalous example, he is ſo careful and ſollicitous, are the weak and infirm.

BUT tho' upon thoſe accounts it muſt perhaps be admitted, that we are more oblig'd to be careful of offending the ignorant, than we need to be of giving offence to the malicious; tho' the caſe of the weak is more pitiable than the caſe of the ſtrong; tho' it is more poſſible to prevent the fall of the one, than of the other, and being more within our power, may for that reaſon be more within the compaſs of our duty; yet I cannot think, we are left at large to order our actions and converſations as we pleaſe, even in reference to the moſt obſtinate and malicious. And if our management in regard to the malicious is to be regulated by our Saviour's conduct towards the *Phariſees*, we may obſerve, that tho' he ſometimes utterly diſregarded their cenſures of him, as having either found by experience, or knowing by his omniſcience, that they proceeded from invincible perverſeneſs, and from ſuch inveterate prejudices, as were not to be remov'd; yet that he generally condeſcended to juſtifie his actions even to them, and to uſe ſuch pleas and arguments in defence of himſelf, as might render him guiltleſs and free from all blame, they themſelves being his judges. Thus, when they accus'd his diſciples for prophanation of the ſabbath by plucking the ears of corn, as they went thro' the corn-fields on the ſabbath-day, which was a tacit reflection upon him for not reproving his diſciples, he apologizes for the innocence of the fact from the neceſſity of it, and from precedents, whoſe authority they could not queſtion, and whoſe applicableneſs to the preſent caſe they could not denie: *Mat.* 12. 1. When Chriſt's healing on the ſabbath-day was made the ground of another charge againſt him, he argues in form from their allow'd principles in favour of it: *And he ſaid unto* Matt. 12. 11, 12. *them, What man ſhall there be among you, that ſhall have one ſheep, and if it fall into a pit on the ſabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a ſheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the ſabbath-day.* When upon a greater cure wrought by him upon a demoniack who was blind and dumb, whereby at once he diſpoſſeſs'd him of the devil, and made him both ſpeak and ſee, the *Phariſees* charg'd him with caſting out devils by *Beelzebub* the prince of the devils, he endeavour'd to convince them of the falſhood of this charge, both by arguing from the nature of the thing that it was impoſſible, and by preſſing them with what we call an argument *ad hominem*, to prove that they could not conſiſtently bring this charge againſt him, without involving others in the ſame accuſation, whom yet they v. 25, 26, 27. did not accuſe. *Jeſus knew their thoughts, and ſaid unto them, Every kingdom divided againſt it ſelf is brought to deſolation; and every city or houſe divided againſt it ſelf ſhall not ſtand. And if Satan caſt out Satan, he is divided againſt himſelf; how then ſhall his kingdom ſtand? And if I by Beelzebub caſt out devils, by whom do your children caſt them*

them out? Therefore they ſhall be your judges. When the ſame hypocritical pretenders accus'd him of ſcandalous converſation in eating with publicans and ſinners, he alleges that his accompanying with them was not to encourage them in, but to reform them from, their vices. *When* Matt. 9. 12, 13.
Jeſus heard what they ſaid unto his diſciples on this head, *he ſaid unto them, They that be whole need not a phyſician, but they that are ſick. I am not come to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance.* When they again objected to him, that his diſciples tranſgreſs'd the tradition of the elders in eating bread with unwaſh'd hands, and charg'd him with connivance at this breach of the canon, he wip'd off the aſperſion, by ſhewing both the invalidity of theſe unwritten traditions, and the wrong grounds on which the objection was built, which ſuppos'd ſuch eating had any efficiency towards defiling the ſoul. When they accus'd him of blaſphemy in ſaying *to the ſick of the palſie, Son, thy ſins be forgiven* Mark 2. 5.
thee, he prov'd his authority to ſay what he ſaid, by bidding the ſick perſon to *ariſe, take up his bed, and walk,* and at the ſame time miraculouſly conveying to him the power of doing what he bad. When they charg'd him with libertiniſm, in not requiring his diſciples to faſt, but ſuffering them to eat and drink, whilſt the diſciples of *John,* and their own, faſted often, he vindicated the preſent omiſſion of this duty, by proving it to be in their circumſtances improper and unſeaſonable. *And* Luke 5. 34, 35.
he ſaid unto them, can ye make the children of the bride-chamber faſt, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom ſhall be taken away from them, and then ſhall they faſt in thoſe days. When they objected to him the inſufficiency of the teſtimony he gave unto himſelf, *Thou beareſt record of thy ſelf, thy record* John. 8. 13.
is not true, he proves the validity of the teſtimony which he appeal'd to for the proof of his miſſion, from the aphoriſms of their own law. *It is written in your law, that the teſtimony of two men is true, I am* v. 17, 18.
one that bear witneſs of my ſelf, and the Father that ſent me beareth witneſs of me.

I HAVE upon this occaſion gone thro' the four Goſpels, and can meet with but one paſſage, which favours the notion of thoſe, who argue for the lawfulneſs of diſregarding what the malicious and perverſe ſhall judge of our actions, from our Saviour's ſuppos'd diſregard to the *Phariſees* being offended with him. When in defence of his diſciples eating with unwaſh'd hands he had laid down this maxim, *Not that which goeth* Matt. 15. 11.
into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man, his diſciples came unto him, and told him that the *Phariſees* were offended or ſcandaliz'd after they heard this ſaying: upon which Chriſt anſwer'd, *Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the* v. 14.
blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both ſhall fall into the ditch. Now all that can be hence inferr'd is, that when we have taken all care poſſible not to give offence to the malicious, we ought not to be troubled, if they are obſtinately reſolv'd to take offence. Our Saviour had done all that could be done to ſet his actions and doctrines in a clear light, but they obſtinately ſhut their eyes againſt the light: if they were ſtill blind, it was not becauſe they could not, but becauſe they would not, ſee the purity of his doctrine, and the holineſs of his converſation: when our Saviour had done every thing that was proper to remove their prejudices, it was time for the diſciples to *let them alone*; and when we, in imitation of our bleſſed Saviour, have done our utmoſt to ſecure our actions from appearing evil, and thereby offending the moſt obſtinate and malicious, then, and not till then, we may *let them*

alone. I have on purpoſe omitted to enlarge upon thoſe reaſons and texts, which might with great plenty be collected together againſt giving offence to the weak, becauſe that is a thing on all ſides confeſs'd; and I have choſe rather to inſiſt upon our obligations to give no offence to the perverſe and malicious, and to repreſent our duty in this matter by our Saviour's conduct towards the *Phariſees*, becauſe our Saviour's treatment of them hath been applied, I think I may now ſay miſapplied, to juſtifie our total diſregard how our actions are judg'd, or ſpoken of by obſtinate and gain-ſaying ſinners.

FROM what hath been ſaid upon this ſubject it is ſufficiently evident, that we ought not only in our actions to have a regard to our own conſciences, but alſo to the conſciences of others; or to ſpeak more properly, that we do not enough regard our own, whilſt we regard not the conſciences of our brethren; that we are bound in Chriſtian charity to do all poſſible good to our brethren, and that we are much more ſtrictly bound even in juſtice to do them no harm, which we can avoid; that we then do them the greateſt harm, and wound them in the moſt tender part, when we hurt their immortal ſouls, and infect them with the pollutions of ſin; that we do as properly tempt and provoke them to ſin by our deeds, as by our words; by our examples, as by our counſels; that they are ſeduc'd to ſin, not only by counſels directly evil, and examples notoriouſly ſinful, but by ſuch ambiguous counſels, as are liable to an ill meaning, and by ſuch ambiguous actions, as are capable of an evil conſtruction; that our actions being as obnoxious to be miſunderſtood thro' their ambiguity, as our words, we ought to be as much upon our guard againſt miſleading others by doubtful actions, as by equivocal expreſſions; that the miſchief done by ſuch miſunderſtood actions is as great, as that which is done by miſinterpreted words, and therefore both in juſtice and charity with equal diligence to be prevented; that a terrible wo is gone out from the mouth of our bleſſed Saviour againſt thoſe by whom offences come, and that all actions, which tempt others to ſin, whether in themſelves actually ſinful, or only ſuch in appearance, come within the notion of offences; that the duty of not offending the weak is inculcated thro' all the diſcourſes and acts of the Apoſtles; and that the duty of not offending even the malicious is both frequently taught in the Goſpel, and plainly illuſtrated by the conduct of our Saviour towards the *Phariſees*; that the giving ſcandal to others, or tempting them to ſin, being in the Goſpel ſo ſtrictly forbidden, the appearance of evil, which may lead to ſin, is for this reaſon carefully to be avoided.

IF *there be* therefore *any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,* if any compaſſion for our brethrens ſouls, if any concern for our own, *let us not look every man on his own things only, but every man alſo on the things of others. Let that mind be in us, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus, and his Apoſtles: let us not think it ſufficient, that all things are lawful to us, unleſs thoſe things that are lawful, are alſo expedient,* and ſuch as edifie. Let us ſeriouſly conſider how much it coſt our Saviour to redeem ſouls, and then we ſhall be religiouſly careful, leſt by our neglect any of thoſe ſouls periſh, for which Chriſt died.

THAT we may be thus ſtrictly careful, and that by this ſtrict care we may promote our own ſpiritual welfare, the eternal happineſs of others, and the glory of God, he of his infinite mercy grant, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

A

SERMON

PREACH'D AT THE

ASSIZES

HELD AT

KINGSTON

Upon *THAMES*;

On *Thurſday*, *March* 20. $17\frac{11}{12}$.

BY

The Honourable Mr. Juſtice POWEL.

TO
THE HONOURABLE
Mr. Juſtice *POWEL.*
THE WORSHIPFUL
JOHN MITCHEL, Eſq;
High-Sheriff of the County of *Surrey.*

The Gentlemen of the Grand-Jury
Of the ſaid County.

George Vernon
Thomas Lant
William Draper
Thomas Heath
George Atwood
John Lade
Henry Byne
Thomas Gratwick
William Genew
William Perkins
Urban Hall
Samuel Kentiſh
Joſeph Wandell
Samuel Ruſh
William Gardiner
John Lampard
Eſquires.

Philip Dacres
Edmund Reading
Samuel Wincop
John Trigg
John Jackſon
William Wicks
Thomas Steavens
Joſeph Gibbons
Thomas Normondy
Robert Smith
Charles King
William Page
Richard Atkinſon
Gentlemen.

The Honourable *Heneage Finch* Eſq;
Sir *Francis Vincent*, Bar.
Knights of the Shire.

And to the reſt of the Gentlemen of *Surrey*,
who appear'd at the Aſſizes at *Kingſton.*

THERE *are as many examples of the principal doctrine advanc'd in the following diſcourſe, as there are perſons to whom it is inſcrib'd. Your ſolemn attendance on the publick worſhip of God in the Church, before you enter'd upon the adminiſtration of Juſtice in the Court; the religious gravity with which the Charge was given from the*

Bench, and the conſcientious faithfulneſs with which it was executed by the Jury; the mutual offices of courteſy, friendſhip, affection, and eſteem, which paſs'd between the Sheriff and the Gentlemen who appear'd at the Aſſizes in great numbers, to do him honour, and their country ſervice; the candour with which this Sermon was heard, and the civilities which were paid to the Preacher of it, not out of any perſonal regards to one, who was in a great meaſure a ſtranger, but in honour of his ſacred function; are ſo many proofs of the influences of Religion, and of your acknowledging your ſelves to be under higher obligations, than the laws of the land.

It was a great recommendation of this Sermon to the gentlemen of Surrey, *that it was preach'd at the deſire of their Sheriff; and it may hope for the more favourable reception from the world, that it is publiſh'd at the unanimous requeſt of ſo many honourable perſons. I am*

Your moſt humble, and

moſt obedient ſervant,

GEORGE SMALRIDGE.

SERMON XLIV.

The Nature and Intent of human Laws.

1 Tim. I. 9.

——The Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawleſs and diſobedient, for ungodly and for ſinners, for unholy and profane——

THE deſign of St. *Paul* in this place is to remove thoſe falſe notions, which ſome had entertain'd of the law, and in their room to eſtabliſh the right. For it ſeems, that ſome affected to be *teachers of the Law*, who were perfect v. 7. ſtrangers to it, *underſtanding neither what they ſaid, nor whereof they affirm'd.* And as thoſe generally are the warmeſt aſſertors of a cauſe, who are leaſt acquainted with the merits of it; ſo theſe bigots for the law made out in zeal, what they wanted in knowledge: they talk'd much, and diſputed eagerly for the honour of the law, but knew nothing all the while of the nature and deſign of it. To ſtop the mouths of ſuch ignorant gain-ſayers, and to ſilence their *vain jangling*, our Apoſtle vouchſafes to inſtruct anew theſe pretended teachers: he points out to them their fundamental miſtake, and gives them a true ſtate of the nature and intent of the law. He grants that the law had its due uſe; but complains that they much abuſed *it*; *We know the law is good, if a man uſe it lawfully.* v. 8. He acknowledges it was very proper for the ends for which it was at firſt inſtituted, but ſhews that they applied it to ends for which it was never deſign'd, and which therefore could never be attain'd by it. They took the law for an adequate rule of action, which, if they obſerv'd, they hop'd to be adjudg'd righteous; whereas it was only intended as a guard againſt exorbitant crimes, and arm'd with penalties to be inflicted upon notorious tranſgreſſors.

It is true, that righteouſneſs, in the very notion of it, includes relation to a law, as conſiſting in a ſtrict obſervance of it; ſo that where there is no law, there can no more be righteouſneſs than there can be tranſgreſſion. The Law therefore in the text muſt be taken in a reſtrain'd ſenſe, and not interpreted of that law of God which is given to mankind as a perpetual and inviolable rule of action, which we uſually call the moral law; but of that peculiar ſcheme of laws, which was directed by *Moſes* to the *Jews*, and which exacted ſome ſpecial duties, and prohibited ſome particular crimes, by the ſanction of temporal rewards and puniſhments. The moral law was made for the righteous, and was the rule and meaſure of righteouſneſs; but this national law was made, not ſo much to direct good men in their duty, as to puniſh the wicked for their tranſgreſſions. The righteous had *a law written in their hearts*, and by this law they willingly, and without conſtraint, order'd all their actions; ſo that there was no need of any other law to bind them. But all men were not of ſo ingenuous and governable a temper, as to hearken to the inward and gentle dictates of right reaſon; ſome were of a ſervile and baſe ſpirit, not to be kept in due bounds without a more ſtrict hand and ſevere diſcipline; and therefore there was need of coercive laws to reſtrain the licentiouſneſs of ſuch as theſe. In this ſenſe, I think, St. *Paul* is to be underſtood, when he ſaith, that *the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawleſs and diſobedient, for ungodly and for ſinners, for unholy and profane.*

WHAT is here ſaid of the law of *Moſes*, the national law of the *Jews*, againſt whoſe prejudices St. *Paul* was in this place concern'd to argue, I ſhall beg leave to apply to national laws in general; ſince what is aſſerted of the *Moſaick* body of laws, which had God himſelf for their author, is not only equally, but much more true of all human laws. I ſhall therefore take the occaſion, which ſeems fairly given me from the words of the text, to ſhew,

I. THAT human laws are not made for the righteous.
II. That they are made for the lawleſs and diſobedient.

WHEN I affirm, that human laws are not made for the righteous, I would not be thought to mean, that the righteous or godly are exempted from the obedience due to human laws; or that human laws, when made by good authority, and no ways repugnant to the laws of God, are not a rule to which the righteous ought to conform their actions. They are ſo far from being looſe from theſe ties, that none are more ſtrongly bound than they, as being taught to obey, *not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake.* The righteous then, as well as wicked, are within the direction of human laws; they would not be righteous, unleſs they obey'd them; but they are not therefore righteous, becauſe they obey them. The laws of men make up part of that rule, the obſervance of which is neceſſary to denominate men righteous; but they are not the adequate rule and entire meaſure of righteouſneſs. Human laws may ſerve to direct good men in ſome branches of their duty; but men would be wanting in the main parts of their duty, unleſs govern'd by an higher principle than human laws. My deſign, therefore, is not to prove any incapacity in human laws to oblige the righteous, upon ſuppoſal of a ſuperior law, but to ſhew the inſufficiency of human laws to make men righteous, when conſider'd in themſelves, and without regard to an higher law.

RIGHTEOUSNESS conſiſts in a ſtrict obſervance of all thoſe duties, to which we are in any reſpects oblig'd; in doing all thoſe things, which we can by any means diſcover our ſelves bound to do; and in abſtaining

ing from all thoſe actions, which we can any way learn to be diſagreeable to Beings endu'd with thoſe faculties which we find in our ſelves, and conſider'd in thoſe circumſtances and relations, in which we are plac'd. That our actions therefore may be in every regard ſuch as they ought to be, the rule by which they are order'd muſt be entire and perfect; and ſufficient motives muſt be offer'd, why we ſhould ſteadily comply with that rule: the laws, by which we are directed, muſt take in the whole compaſs of our duty, and they muſt alſo have authority ſufficient to oblige us to the performance of it. For if the rule be imperfect, our duty, which riſes no higher, will be defective too; and be the rule in it ſelf never ſo exact, it can have no influence on our actions, till we are convinc'd, that we are bound to govern our ſelves by it.

Now human laws are inſufficient to make men righteous upon both theſe accounts.

1. Because they do not point out all thoſe actions, which we muſt perform, if we would be eſteem'd righteous.
2. Because, tho' they did direct us in our whole duty, they would not have authority ſufficient to oblige us to the performance of it.

Firſt, Human laws do not point out all thoſe actions, which we muſt perform, if we would be eſteem'd righteous.

Righteousness, as hath been ſaid, takes in the whole extent of our duty, ariſing from any relations we ſtand in to God, to our ſelves, or to our neighbours. Our duty to God, which is the foundation of the reſt, we are not to learn from human laws, which would prove very ill guides to us in this matter, but from his own will, as diſcoverable by the right uſe of our reaſon, or manifeſted to us by expreſs revelation. What ſervice of ours will be acceptable to God, what he will be pleas'd to reward, we can know only from God himſelf, or from thoſe to whom God hath made known his good pleaſure; which communication we have no reaſon to think the ſingular prerogative of thoſe, who amongſt men have the ſovereign power of making laws. Human laws may enforce thoſe duties which natural or reveal'd Religion teaches; but are no farther fitted to direct us in knowing them, than as they are themſelves directed by a better rule: they may pretend to declare and to interpret the law of God, but by ſuch declarations we learn only what the makers of theſe laws think to be God's will; or, perhaps barely what they would have us think, not what we ought to think, and what the will of God undoubtedly is. For after ſuch interpretations, there is ſtill room for a reaſonable man to ſuſpend his opinion, and to enquire farther; and, according to the iſſue of his enquiry, to judge and determine. Now a rule that wants thus to be tried, cannot it ſelf be a ſtandard: when it hath been examin'd by that which is own'd for ſuch, it may ſerve for uſe; but then what is meaſur'd by it is exact, not becauſe fitted to that rule, but becauſe it will bear an higher teſt. The laws of men may be, and in many caſes are, as different as their languages; ſo that were we to learn our obligations to God from them, mens duties would change with the climate, and the meaſures of religious and moral actions would be as variable, as thoſe which in different countries ſerve for civil uſes. In ſhort, it is in vain to expect from human laws a faithful direction in the duties of Religion, whilſt men are fallible, and God is unchangeable.

Nor muſt we hope for better help from them, in diſcerning what we owe to our ſelves: to know this, 'tis abſolutely neceſſary that we firſt know our ſelves aright; that we take a view of the excellencies and defects of our nature, as alſo of our own perſonal abilities or infirmities; that we conſider in what rank we ſtand to Beings above or below us; and what that ſtation is, which we are to maintain and adorn: that we be thoroughly acquainted with our tempers and inclinations, and that we know the ſtrength and bent of our paſſions. Now ſuch knowledge as this, however neceſſary for the right government of our ſelves, is not to be had from our books of law. We are not taught there, what we owe to our ſelves, but to the publick: laws may provide againſt doing injury to others; but a man may be as miſchievous to himſelf as he pleaſes, without any breach of the law.

It becomes the wiſdom of human laws to take due care, that our unruly paſſions of anger, envy, and malice, do not break out to the prejudice of our neighbour; but theſe laws make no proviſion againſt the tumult rais'd in our own breaſts; the ferment within is not allay'd by any reſtraint from without, but proves rather the more violent for want of vent. Some of the groſſer acts of uncleanneſs, and exceſſes of intemperance, may fall within the reach of human laws, becauſe they tend to confuſion and diſorder, to invaſion of eſtabliſh'd rights, breach of publick peace, and the ruin of ſociety: but a polluted imagination hath ſtill its free ſcope; and he who is quiet and peaceable in his intemperance, may ſin on with impunity.

So again, ſumptuary laws are with good effect made againſt exceſs in apparel; but never any of theſe extended ſo far, as to correct the pride of the heart, or to puniſh it, tho' expreſs'd by the overt-acts of an haughty countenance, a ſcornful geſture, and an arrogant tongue. Nay, the laws are ſo far from tending to ſubdue pride, that, unleſs guarded againſt, they are apt in ſome inſtances to promote it; for ſhould all perſons put as great a value upon themſelves as the laws do, they might be led *to think of themſelves more highly than they ought to think.* It is neceſſary to the preſervation of order, and for maintaining the reverence due to authority, that thoſe, who are in a more eminent degree inveſted with it, ſhould be diſtinguiſh'd from others by titles of honour, ſplendor of habit, ſolemnity of attendance, and other uſual ceremonies of pomp and grandeur. But ſhould magiſtrates, who for weighty and important reaſons are honour'd with theſe peculiar privileges, take occaſion from hence to form in their minds extravagant notions of their own real worth and excellency; ſhould they, inſtead of making uſe of theſe prudential eſtabliſhments for the eaſe and benefit of mankind, be prompted to deſpiſe and look down upon others as creatures of a lower rank, and much beneath their level and regard; they would exceed the due bounds of humility, and would juſtly merit that ſcorn, with which God in juſtice, and men in revenge, never fail to puniſh the proud.

And as human laws, where there is want of caution, may miniſter to pride; ſo may they alſo occaſionally contribute to an immoderate deſire of riches: for ſince mens appetite after theſe always bears proportion to the opinion they have of their value, he that meaſures their worth by the eſteem they are in, in the eye of the law, may be apt to rate them ſomewhat higher than a wiſe or good man ought. Nor will the pleaſures of this world loſe any thing in our eſteem, if we take our meaſures of them from human laws: for laws eſtabliſh'd upon temporal rewards and puniſhments, are apt to create in us an undue eſteem for thoſe good things of this world, which would not be propos'd as proper en-

encouragements of our obedience, unleſs look'd upon as highly valuable; and an immoderate opinion of thoſe evils, which would not be threatned againſt the diſobedient, unleſs look'd upon as grievous and intolerable. So far therefore are human laws from directing us in all the duties we owe to our ſelves, that unleſs we are under the conduct of a better principle, we are in no ſmall danger of being frequently miſguided by them.

But altho' they are not ſo well adapted to inform us in our duty to God, and to our own ſouls; yet we may expect at leaſt a full direction from them in what we owe to our neighbours. For it being the principal intent of theſe laws, to ſecure to every one his right, it may reaſonably be preſum'd, that all ſocial duties are by them ſufficiently provided for. And yet, upon a ſhort and tranſient view, it will appear, that they are very defective even in this: for altho' the good of ſociety be as much concern'd in mens contributing jointly to the happineſs of each other, as in their abſtaining from mutual wrong; yet human laws ſeem to be rather contriv'd for repreſſing injuries, than for promoting good offices. The law takes care, that I ſhould not deprive another of what is his; but it doth not therefore oblige me to impart to him, what is my own: I ſhall be puniſh'd if I unjuſtly oppreſs my brother; but I am not therefore bound charitably to relieve him. It is true indeed, that even this relief is in ſome caſes, by the piety of our municipal laws, provided for: but a legal charity is, God knows, very narrow, takes in but few objects, expreſſes it ſelf only one way, and loſes all pretence to merit, when, being exacted from us, it is no longer charity, but a tax. Slander and detraction, falſe-witneſs and defamation, are prohibited by the law of the land: but this lays no obligation on me to ſupport the injur'd credit of my neighbour, to defend his reputation againſt prevailing prejudices, and the clamours of a party; and to venture my own good name, by ſtepping in to the ſuccour of his. There is no greater peſt to ſociety than ingratitude; this hinders the free intercourſe of good offices, and is as fatal to the body politick, as ſtopping the circulation of the blood would be to the body natural: and yet human laws do not pretend to enforce upon us an equal return for benefits receiv'd; nor does there lie in our courts of juſtice, or even of equity, an action of ingratitude. To ſupport the oppreſs'd, to inſtruct the ignorant, to reverence good men, and reform the bad; to be bountiful to ſome, and courteous to all; to be ſerviceable to the age we live in, and to conſult the good of poſterity, are duties on which the welfare of ſociety doth abſolutely depend; and yet a man may be wanting in any, or all of theſe, without fearing any cenſure from the laws of men.

It would be very eaſy to draw up a much larger catalogue of duties, which a reaſonable man cannot but own himſelf ſtrictly bound to, which yet neither the common nor ſtatute-law exact from him. Some actions fall not within the notice and cognizance of men, and therefore it would be in vain for men to give rules about them: ſome belong to an higher court, and are not within the verge of human authority: ſome are to be left free, becauſe they would ceaſe to be laudable, if done upon compulſion. Some duties are antecedent to human laws, and ſome repugnant to them: ſome we ſhould be oblig'd to, were there no ſuch thing as government; and ſome we may be bound to in oppoſition to human eſtabliſhments: ſome, as to the ſubſtance and matter of them, are enjoin'd by the law; but then the circumſtances and manner of performance, on which their value chiefly depends, is left free and unreſtrain'd. Upon which, and many other accounts, it ſufficiently appears, that human laws are a very imperfect and defective rule of human actions.

But were human laws admitted to be a full and adequate rule of action; did they take in all the inſtances and all the degrees of duty, ſo that we might rely upon them as a ſafe and infallible guide; yet they would be inſufficient to make men righteous, becauſe of themſelves they would not have authority enough to oblige men to the performance of thoſe actions, which they might preſcribe.

All authority is founded either in the right, which thoſe who command have to require our obedience, or the power which they have to extort it. For thoſe, who pretend to put a reſtraint upon our liberty, muſt either alledge good reaſons, why we ought to act as they direct; or muſt work upon our fears, by ſhewing the miſchief which will attend our non-compliance. Senſe of duty may prevail upon an ingenuous ſpirit to obey thoſe, who have a fair title to command, tho' they might be diſobey'd with impunity; and fear of puniſhment will work upon the weak, to pay that deference to the ſtronger in point of prudence, which they might refuſe to pay with innocence. Now if human laws challenge our obedience upon the former claim, as being made by thoſe who have a right to give rules to us, this right muſt be made out by ſome laws antecedent to them; for the bare challenge of a right without any other evidence of its being due, will never be admitted for a good proof of it.

If it be told me, that protection and obedience are reciprocal duties; that ſince I receive the benefits of government, it is reaſonable I ſhould conform my ſelf to the rules of it; this way of arguing ſuppoſes me convinc'd beforehand, that to act thus gratefully is highly agreeable to the reaſon of mankind; that to do otherwiſe is repugnant to reaſon; that is, in other words, that to do one is morally good, and to do the other is morally evil; which would not be, unleſs there was ſome rule or law, which thus diſtinguiſh'd them.

If it ſhould be urg'd, that I have virtually or expreſly given my conſent to be govern'd by ſuch and ſuch laws; that my anceſtors acting for me have precluded me from my natural liberty; or that I have voluntarily reſign'd it by my own free act and deed; not to diſpute at preſent the authority of ſuch proxy, 'tis plain, that the whole ſtreſs of this claim is built upon a falſe foundation, unleſs it can be made out, that what we promiſe, that we ought to perform; which is a maxim, not to be firſt learn'd from human laws, but from morality, or revelation.

The ill conſequences of diſobedience, and the miſchiefs which would ariſe from confuſion and anarchy, may be diſplay'd at large, and ſet forth in their proper colours to engage the ſubject to a quiet and ſubmiſſive conduct: but if he hath not before learn'd to diſtinguiſh between good and evil, then order or diſorder, peace or war, the publick good or the publick ruin, are only different ſounds; and there is no reaſon in the nature of things, why any man ſhould prefer one to the other, or promote one rather than the other.

A perswasion that thoſe who govern us, have a tender regard to our intereſts, and will better promote them than we could do our ſelves, is a very good reaſon, why we ſhould quietly follow their direction: but unleſs thoſe, who are above the reſtraint of human laws, are influenc'd fluenc'd by ſome higher principles, we have no ſufficient grounds to ſuppoſe the magiſtrate at all concern'd to conſult or promote the good of any one but himſelf, or to propoſe to himſelf any end but his own pleaſure. Whatever other reaſons may be offer'd why we ought, as of right, to obey human laws, will be found to preſuppoſe us under ſome obligations to a ſuperior law: and, upon a thorough enquiry, we ſhall be fully convinc'd, that the higher powers have not only no better, but no other plea to our obedience, as a debt we cannot in juſtice deny them, but only this one, which is a very good one, that they *are ordain'd of God.*

But whether human laws have of themſelves a right to require our obedience, or not; yet if the ſanctions annex'd to them are ſufficient to enforce our compliance, their authority will, it is confeſs'd, ſtand firm and unſhaken. For altho' nice men may diſtinguiſh betwixt a right to require obedience, and power to enforce it; altho' we may be taught in the ſchools to make a difference betwixt the law and the penalty, ſo as to acknowledge an obligation to keep the law, tho' there were no danger of incurring any puniſhment upon non-obſervance; yet, perhaps, in practice, the only reaſon why we keep any law, is the apprehenſion of ſome evil which would attend our diſobedience. We are taught indeed by St. *Paul, to be ſubject not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience-ſake*; but he, who obeys out of conſcience, is as much influenc'd by fear of puniſhment, as he who is ſubject for wrath: the only difference is, that the one fears the puniſhments threatned by men, the other is afraid of the damnation denounc'd by God. If therefore the puniſhments threatned by men to the tranſgreſſors of their laws, are ſufficient to engage our fears, whether of right they ought or not, it is certain, that in fact they will be obey'd. Rom. 13. 5.

But that the penalties, which are annex'd to the breach of human laws, are too weak a reſtraint to hinder men from tranſgreſſing them, will appear from this conſideration, that where a ſtrong appetite of pleaſure, or proſpect of gain, invites us to any action, the evils which are threatned on the other ſide to deter us from it, cannot be of weight enough to determine our choice to the forbearance, unleſs repreſented both as unavoidable, ſo that there is no eſcape from them; and alſo as intolerable, ſo that the pleaſures propos'd cannot counter-balance them. For, be the evils denounc'd never ſo grievous, yet if they may be averted, we ſhall venture on the forbidden action, in hopes of impunity; or if they be never ſo certain, yet if they can be tolerably well endur'd, the pleaſure which we aim at may be thought worth the purchaſe, tho' bought with ſome pain. Whence it comes to paſs, that the penalties threatned by human laws cannot be always effectual to reſtrain men from the violation of them, becauſe they are ſuch as many may hope to eſcape, and ſuch as ſome may be willing to bear.

Guilt and puniſhment, how neceſſary ſoever a connexion they may have in the reaſon of things, do not always go cloſe together: one follows the other, but ſometimes ſo lamely, that the ſinner may have got into the other world, before vengeance overtakes him. For the laws, tho' they are ſevere in their threats, yet are frequently harmleſs enough in the execution. They cannot execute themſelves; and unleſs thoſe who are entruſted in the adminiſtration eſpouſe their quarrel, they may be trampled on without avenging themſelves upon the aggreſſor. The ſword of juſtice is ſometimes permitted to reſt in quiet; and when it is drawn and brandiſh'd in the face of a ſinner, yet ſtill force may ward off the blow, or ſlight may decline it. The methods of evaſion are well ſtudied, and much practis'd: and it is ſaid to be no inconſiderable part of the knowledge of the law, to know how far it may be broken, without hazard to the offender. Secrecy in ſinning, where the ſinner can be content to ſin alone, is a ſecure proviſion againſt any danger from human laws: and if ſome have been prevail'd with to bear evidence to their own guilt, this hath been owing, not to any perfection in human laws, but to the fear of a judgment to come, and the over-ruling terrors of a wounded conſcience. But even thoſe crimes, that do not eſcape all diſcovery, may yet go unpuniſh'd for want of ſufficient evidence; ſufficient not only to ſatisfie an unprejudic'd man, but to ſilence all cavils: for a full and ſatisfactory proof doth not always amount to a legal conviction.

There are few cauſes ſo deſperate, as not to be able to purchaſe an advocate; few of ſo ill a complexion, but by colours handſomly laid on, their deformity may in a good meaſure be diſguis'd. Where a flat denial can take no place, there may be room left for a well-contriv'd apology: faults that cannot be clearly wip'd off, may be much extenuated; where the fact is own'd, the quality of it may ſtill admit of a debate: inadvertency, ignorance of the law, honeſty of intention, may be pleaded in bar of too rigid a ſentence; a witneſs that bears too hard upon a criminal, who can neither be frighted into ſilence, nor hir'd to downright perjury, may yet be prevail'd on to palliate or diſſemble the truth; or if his honeſty be too ſtanch for this, yet ſtill he is capable of being manag'd: a dextrous enquiry may fetch out ſuch an anſwer, as better ſerves the examiner's purpoſe, than a true one would do: and the ſame plainneſs and ſimplicity of manners, which places a well-meaning man above corruption, may lay him the more open to have his teſtimony thus practis'd upon. If none of theſe artifices can ſcreen the criminal from juſtice, yet partiality and favour, or a miſtaken notion of compaſſion, may acquit him: or if he be a ſinner of quality and intereſt, tho' the crimes of ſuch an one are of the worſt conſequence, becauſe of the ſcandal of the example; yet licence to offend, with exemption from puniſhment, is a privilege not raſhly to be invaded.

Now, had we no other argument of the weakneſs of human laws, this one conſideration would enough prove their inſufficiency, that thoſe, whoſe temptations to offend are greateſt, and whoſe vices ſpread fartheſt, are under the leaſt reſtraint and awe from the laws of men. For puniſhments amongſt men are generally applied rather to perſons, than things; and that the loweſt ſort of men are moſt often ſufferers, is not perhaps more owing to the exceeding greatneſs of their villanies, than to the meanneſs of the villains.

All theſe, and many more ſubterfuges, more than it is fit honeſt men ſhould be acquainted with, have crafty ſinners to eſcape the rigour of the law: and altho' theſe ſhould be thought wild and imaginary ſuppoſitions of things that never yet happen'd; tho' we were taught by conſtant experience, that our courts of judicature were perfect ſtrangers to all artifice in pleadings, falſhood in teſtimonies, partiality in verdicts, iniquity in ſentences; yet this would only ſhew what a powerful influence Religion had, not what ſecurity we might expect from our laws, if the fear of God were quite extinguiſh'd in the hearts of men. The principles of Religion are pre-ſuppos'd in the proceſſes of our courts; and to the influence of theſe we muſt aſcribe the regular adminiſtration of juſtice, wherever it is found: the fears of another world, and the reverence paid to oaths, which is built upon thoſe fears, are the only things that can inſure to us veracity in witneſſes, impartiality in jurors, integrity in judges. If theſe fears were once remov'd, the puniſhments of this world, tho' they could not poſſibly be eſcap'd, yet would loſe much of their terror: death it ſelf, which is the utmoſt that men can inflict, would be leſs dreadful than it is, and often would be fled to as a refuge, if there were no lurking ſuſpicions of a judgment to follow: ſenſe of guilt, and remorſe of conſcience, are the moſt bitter ingredients of all puniſhments: *the ſting of death is ſin*; where there is no conſciouſneſs of this, the innocent perſon meets death with chearfulneſs; and where the ſenſe of this is worn out by an habitual courſe of ſinning, the obſtinate malefactor goes off the ſtage with an unconcern'd ſtupidity. Now, if the terrors of another world are neceſſary to embitter the puniſhments of this; if the penalties of human laws are not ſo grievous, but that men will venture upon them, tho' certain to ſuffer; or if there be probable hopes of eſcaping the puniſhment, when they do offend; if the ſanctions annex'd to them will not enforce their obſervance, and they have no other authority in themſelves whereby to oblige; if not only their authority be precarious, but their direction imperfect; if they do not extend to all duties, nor reach to all men; nothing needs to be added farther, to ſhew their inſufficiency to make men righteous.

BUT altho' they are not ſufficient to this purpoſe, yet they are highly expedient to another; altho' they cannot of themſelves make men perfectly righteous, yet, in ſubordination to an higher law, they are of great uſe to reſtrain men from being profligately wicked; tho' they are not made for the righteous as an adequate rule of action, yet as a curb and check upon ſin, *they are made for the lawleſs and diſobedient, for ungodly and for ſinners, for unholy and profane.*

HAD the laws of God their due influence over the minds of men; were they heartily believ'd and ſincerely practis'd, there would be little or no occaſion for the laws of men: but ſince there are *lawleſs and diſobedient*, who refuſe to be govern'd by the divine laws, *ungodly and profane*, who peremptorily reject their authority, it is convenient there ſhould be ſome curb to reſtrain the licentiouſneſs of theſe.

THE evils of another world, how great ſoever in themſelves, yet, becauſe plac'd at a diſtance, make not always the ſame lively impreſſions on the hearts of men, as leſſer puniſhments brought nearer home: in order therefore to deter men from vice, it is of uſe, that thoſe, who do not look far enough to be affected with dangers that are more remote, ſhould have their fears wrought upon by ſuch penalties, as, being at hand, act more ſtrongly, than do greater torments in reverſion. Some are ſo far ſunk in ſenſuality, that they can form to themſelves no notions of any good or evil, but what affects their ſenſes: they never look backwards or forwards, ſo as to feel any remorſe for what is paſt, or to foreſee any ill conſequences that are to come. St. *Paul* deſcribes theſe men, as having their *underſtandings darkned, being alienated from the life of* Epheſ. 4. 18, 19. *God, thro' the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the hardneſs of their heart; who being paſt feeling, give themſelves over unto laſciviouſneſs, working all uncleanneſs with greedineſs.* All addreſſes made to the reaſon of ſuch men will be in vain, becauſe their *underſtandings are darkned*: all diſcourſe to them upon the principles of Religion will be foreign and inſignificant, becauſe they are *alienated from the life of God*: all attempts on their affections will fail, becauſe their *hearts, being hardned*, are incapable of any impreſſions: nor will any appeals to their conſciences be heard, becauſe they are *paſt feeling*. The only way which is left to come at the ſouls of ſuch men, is by a ſtrong application to their ſenſes; theſe are ſtill awake and vigorous; and upon theſe, by wholſome puniſhments, we may ſtill hope to make ſome good impreſſion.

THOSE, who pretend that the diſtinctions of virtue and vice are arbitrary, and founded not in the nature of the thing, but in the opinions of men, are yet agreed, that the differences betwixt pleaſure and pain are not imaginary, but real: if honeſt and diſhoneſt are only different ſounds, yet they will eaſily allow, that corporal eaſe and corporal puniſhment are different things: they ought therefore to be convinc'd by their own principles, to learn the difference of right and wrong, duty and ſin, from the different effects which they produce; and ſince they are not able to diſtinguiſh virtue and vice by their ſeveral roots, which lie too deep for them to look into, they ſhould be taught to diſtinguiſh them by the fruits they bear, the bodily pleaſure or pain which human laws have annex'd to them; by the feeling of which, they may literally have their very *ſenſes exercis'd to diſcern both good and evil.* The Pſal. 32. 10. Pſalmiſt hath intimated to us, that it is poſſible for men to be *as the horſe and the mule, which have no underſtanding*; and he hath directed us to an expedient how even theſe may be manag'd; *their mouth muſt be held in with bit and bridle*; they muſt be under the reſtraint of ſevere laws, *leſt they come near unto thee* to aſſault thee.

IT is well for thoſe who deny the exiſtence of a God, and the immortality of their own ſouls, that they are not quite ſo deſpicable creatures in the judgment of other men, as they are in their own; for if others had the ſame degrading notions of them, as they have of themſelves, I can ſee no reaſon why a miſchievous atheiſt, who diſturbs the peace, and diſquiets the lives, and thirſts after the blood of men, ſhould find better quarter than any other beaſts of prey: if the reverence paid to our common humanity ſecures ſuch an one from private vengeance, ſo that tho' *his hand be againſt every man, every man's hand is not lifted up againſt him*; yet certainly it concerns magiſtrates, who are *the miniſters of God, avengers to execute wrath upon evil-doers*, not to *bear the ſword in vain.*

MEN of theſe looſe principles are apt to plead much for the ſufficiency of human laws: they think good and evil, right and wrong, well enough diſtinguiſh'd by theſe, without any recourſe to a ſuperior lawgiver: the terrors of another world may be of uſe, they tell us, to fright the credulous and ſuperſtitious, but wiſe and knowing men, ſuch as they are, want not to be kept in awe by the propoſal of any foreign dangers: it is reaſonable, therefore, that an experiment of this pretended perfection of human laws be firſt made upon atheiſts themſelves; that thoſe, who acknowledge no other laws, ſhould feel the utmoſt weight of theſe, that we may be able to judge of their force and influence, by the good effects they have on the lives and practices of ſuch men. A ſteady and impartial execution of good and wholſome laws, is the beſt and moſt convincing anſwer to thoſe objections, which profane and ungodly men, with great confidence, and little reaſon, pretend to raiſe Eccl. 8. 11. againſt the adminiſtrations of providence: *becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the heart of the ſons of men*

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is fully ſet in them to do evil. Now this is a very perverſe abuſe of the mercies of God, and worthy of atheiſts, to make that indulgence, which is deſign'd to reclaim them, and which would have this effect upon ingenuous minds, an argument for their obſtinate impenitence: there can be no greater inſtance of diſingenuity and folly, than thus to *deſpiſe the riches of divine goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering, not conſidering that the goodneſs of God ſhould lead them to repentance.* But this, which is the worſt argument in the world for going on to do evil, becomes no argument at all, when, by the vigilance of magiſtrates, *ſentence is executed ſpeedily againſt every evil work*; when puniſhment followeth cloſely upon ſin, and its wages are immediately paid, as ſoon as the work is done.

It is a common objection againſt the world's being govern'd by a wiſe and juſt Ruler, that *no man knoweth either love or hatred, by all that is before them*; *that all things come alike to all*; *there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked*; *to the clean, and to the unclean*; *to him that ſacrificeth, and to him that ſacrificeth not*; that *as is the good, ſo is the ſinner*; *and he that ſweareth, as he that feareth an oath.* Now tho' many ſolid and ſatisfactory anſwers may be given to this objection, yet the beſt reply that can be made to thoſe who ſtart it, is that which good magiſtrates do give, by ſo diſpenſing rewards and puniſhments, that *all things* may not *come alike to all,* but that *the clean* may be diſtinguiſh'd from *the unclean*; the religious from the irreligious; *the good* from the *ſinner*; the perjur'd perſon from him that regardeth an oath; and ſo every one may *know love or hatred,* even *by what is before them*; what, according to the merits or demerits of their actions, each man ſees and feels. Eccl. 9. 1, 2.

Nor can atheiſtical perſons have any juſt pretenſions to favour, any pleas to immunity, from the rigour of the law: for whatever others may pretend for their non-compliance with the commands of men, becauſe repugnant to ſome other principles, of which they are fully perſwaded; yet certainly an atheiſt hath no tenderneſs of conſcience, on which he can found a claim to the benefit of toleration. How narrow ſoever we make the bounds of civil power, tho' we confine it wholly to the care of our worldly intereſts, and exclude the magiſtrate from any concernment for the honour of God, and the ſalvation of mens ſouls; yet ſtill the ſuppreſſing of irreligious principles will fall within his province, becauſe they ſlacken the bonds of government, undermine the foundations of ſociety, and are deſtructive, not only of mens ſalvation, but alſo of their civil intereſts.

But were there no proſpect of any good to be wrought on wicked and ungodly men themſelves by the diſcipline of laws; yet puniſhment is not uſeleſs, if it ſerves to keep others within the lines of duty: where a tainted member is incurable, exciſion may be neceſſary to prevent the infection from ſpreading farther; for thoſe mercies are cruel, which ſpare the guilty till none be left innocent. Several criminals have made amends for the ſcandal of their lives, by the uſeful example of their infamous deaths; a ſuffering malefactor wants no uſe of words to inform the underſtanding, or to move the paſſions of the moſt unthinking ſpectator.

And as human laws are of this excellent uſe to prevent the ſpreading of vice, where there are no hopes of a cure; ſo, in caſes leſs deſperate, they may prove proper remedies to correct its poiſon, and abate its malignity.

lignity. Temporal puniſhments are a ſenſible argument of the evil of ſin; and tho' no one ſhall reap the rewards of piety, who abſtains from ſin purely for fear of theſe; yet they often give the firſt occaſion to conſider the nature and danger of it, and ſo lead the way to reformation upon better principles. He who obſerves, that the cuſtoms and laws of men agree to crown ſome actions with honour and rewards, and to annex to others ſhame and puniſhment, may be inclin'd to purſue this thought farther, and to enquire, whether there be any ground in the nature of things for ſuch diſcrimination; whether theſe are only arbitrary diſtinctions, or neceſſary deductions from allow'd principles; whether the actions thus rewarded and puniſh'd are good and evil, becauſe commanded or forbidden by men; or whether they are not enjoin'd and prohibited by human laws, becauſe preſuppos'd good and evil: whether if the ſcene was chang'd, and thoſe actions made penal which are now rewarded; and on the other ſide, thoſe which are now puniſh'd made rewardable, this would not be to croſs upon the nature of things, and to introduce diſorder and confuſion. He who hath occaſion given him, by the puniſhments allotted to crimes by human laws, thus deliberately to examine the original of good and evil, will perhaps trace it at laſt to the fountain-head, and find that the firſt link of this chain is fix'd to the throne of God.

TRUE it is that temporal puniſhments, whilſt conſider'd barely as ſuch, can never make a man ſincerely penitent; ſince to do evil, and to be griev'd becauſe we ſuffer for it, are quite different things from that *godly ſorrow which bringeth forth repentance*: but when theſe puniſhments come to be more narrowly look'd into; when the ſinner hath leiſure to reflect, and is by ſuffering put into a fit temper for conſideration, he may be able, in the puniſhments inflicted on him by men, to diſcern the hand of God; then his calamities will appear to him in another view, as the terrible effects of God's diſpleaſure, evident ſigns of a judgment to come, and a ſure earneſt of thoſe wages, which ſinners ſhall receive in the day of retribution. Such reaſonings as theſe have frequently taken up the laſt thoughts, and melted the hearts of dying criminals; and charity prompts us to think, that there are ſeveral ſouls now in paradiſe, who had never ſhar'd in the merits of Chriſt's death, had not faith in his blood, and repentance from evil works, been firſt wrought in them, upon occaſion of their own ſufferings. Since, therefore, human laws lay a reſtraint on thoſe men, who acknowledge no other; ſince the pains threatned to ſin by theſe laws are oftentimes a counter-balance to the pleaſures which allure to it; ſince preſent and ſenſible evils work more ſtrongly on the generality of men, than do future and ſpiritual; ſince the diſcipline of laws doth prevent the growth of vice, and hinder it from becoming epidemical; ſince temporal puniſhments do fright ſome from offending, and are ſubſervient to the working of repentance in others; tho' human laws are not, for the reaſons which have deen alledg'd, ſufficient of themſelves to make men righteous, yet, under the conduct of Religion, they may be expedient to hinder men from being profligately wicked.

FROM what hath been ſaid, both of the defects and of the expediency of human laws, we may be able to form a due notion of them; ſo as neither, with the *Hobbiſt*, to think them the ſovereign rule of right and wrong; nor, with ſome wild ſectaries, to look upon them as uſurpations upon the kingdom of Chriſt. Their imperfection ſhews us how abſolutely neceſſary Religion is for the ſupport of government; and the uſefulneſs of them plainly demonſtrates, how great a bleſſing good government is. It is neceſſary that the laws of God and men ſhould mutually ſupport each other; that Religion ſhould make up the natural and unavoidable defects of all human laws, and that human laws ſhould enforce and ſecond the precepts of Religion. No attempts can be made upon either of theſe, but muſt tend to the ruin of both: all doctrines that favour irreligion, ſap the foundations of government; and all that aim at the overthrow of government, take away one main ſupport of virtue and Religion.

HENCE may we be able to judge how much morality is indebted to the *Socinians*, who pretend to be great promoters of it, and yet rob it of all aſſiſtance from the civil magiſtrate. They tell us, that courts of judicature, in which wicked men are condemn'd to corporal puniſhments, have no place under the Goſpel: that he who paſſes ſentence of death on a malefactor, is himſelf a murderer: that Chriſt only can puniſh equally, and therefore that Chriſt is the only judge: that God hath promis'd forgiveneſs to all who at any time repent; and that therefore none ought to be cut off by capital puniſhments, becauſe theſe ſhorten the time allotted by God to work out repentance: that all Chriſtians are bound to forgive each other; and that therefore no magiſtrate can, without forfeiting his title to Chriſtianity, puniſh any one: that to ſay a magiſtrate, as ſuch, may condemn what he is bound to forgive as a Chriſtian, is as abſurd, as it would be to affirm, that a man of honour, who is provok'd, ought to forgive the injury as a Chriſtian, but may require the ſatisfaction of a gentleman. Why theſe doctrines are not now-a-days ſpread in our own language with the ſame induſtry, as ſome other peculiar opinions of theſe great reaſoners are; why thoſe, who daringly and openly ſpread thoſe doctrines, which are injurious to the honour of their Lord and Saviour, are more cautious in venting theſe tenets, which derogate from the authority of magiſtrates, it is not difficult to gueſs; and how far ſuch principles may entitle the maintainers of them to the favour and countenance of thoſe, who are concern'd to vindicate the honour of magiſtracy, will deſerve their conſideration. In the mean time we cannot but think it poſſible, that thoſe men ſhould miſtake the ſenſe of ſome very plain texts of Scripture, who deny all coercive power to magiſtrates, when St. *Peter* aſſures us, *they are ſent by God for the puniſhment of evil-doers*; 1 Pet. 2. 14. and St. *Paul, that they are the miniſters of God, and revengers to execute wrath upon them that do evil.* Rom. 13. 4.

NOW if magiſtrates are the miniſters of God, it is our duty to reverence them as ſuch, and it is their duty to act up to the height of that character. Their obligation to govern well needs not be repreſented in more words, and cannot be urg'd in more forcible terms, than thoſe of *Jehoſhaphat* to his judges; *Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you, take heed, and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God*; 2 Chron. 19. 6. there is no iniquity with the Lord God, and therefore there ought to be none with thoſe, who repreſent him, and of whom he hath ſaid that *they are Gods.* And on the other ſide, the obligation of ſubjects cannot be built upon any principles ſo binding, as thoſe upon which it is laid by the Apoſtle, *Whoſoever reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God; and they that reſiſt, ſhall receive to themſelves damnation.* Rom. 13. 2.

LET us therefore be careful to pay all that reverence to human laws, which is due to them; and let us at the ſame time be equally careful not to pay them ſuch deference, as may any ways derogate from the greater regard we owe to the laws of God: let us look upon human laws as one part of that rule, to which we ought to conform our actions; but let us not eſteem them the adequate rule and perfect meaſure of righteouſneſs: let us *ſubmit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake*, and to every ordinance of God for its own ſake: let us conſider what a deplorable condition mankind would be in without laws, without magiſtrates, without government; but let us at the ſame time conſider, how much more deplorable their condition would be, if they were to live without the Goſpel, without Religion, *without God, in the world*: let us not ſo miſinterpret any places of Scripture, as to thruſt the civil magiſtrate out of his lawful rights; but on the other ſide, let us be cautious how we aſcribe any ſuch perfections to human laws, as tend to the dethroning God: let us not allow our ſelves in any wilful tranſgreſſion of their laws, who are appointed *the miniſters of God to execute wrath upon them that do evil*; but let us remember, that we are accountable for all our thoughts, words, and actions, to an higher Judge: let us reverence the authority of God delegated to men; but let us much more adore it in God the fountain: let us revere power; but let us much rather dread omnipotence: let us fear *thoſe who have power to kill the body*; but let us much more *fear him, who is able to deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell*: let us be afraid to do evil, in regard to the magiſtrate, becauſe *he beareth not the ſword in vain*, but let us much more be afraid
Deut. 4. 24. to do evil, out of awe to God; *for the Lord our God is a conſuming fire, even a jealous God.*

WE ſhall in all points of our duty behave our ſelves as good ſubjects, and as good Chriſtians; we ſhall pay that reverence we owe to the laws of men, and to the Goſpel of Chriſt; if we take care, in the firſt place, to approve our ſelves to God, and then to *provide things honeſt in the ſight of men*: if we aim at that perfect righteouſneſs for which *the law is not made*, as well as avoid thoſe exorbitant crimes *for which the law is made*: if in ſhort, we, out of conſcience to God, comply with the righteous laws of men; but in the mean time make that law alone the rule of our lives, which will be the rule by which we ſhall be judg'd at
2 Theſſ. 1. 7,8. the general aſſize; *when the Lord Jeſus ſhall be reveal'd from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

SERMON XLV.

Rewards proportionable to Works.

1 Cor. III. 8.

——— And every man ſhall receive his own reward, according to his own labour.

IT is the peculiar honour of the Goſpel, that it diſcovers and exhibits to us the nobleſt, and moſt illuſtrious rewards, for the encouragement and ſupport of thoſe who perſevere in holineſs: And it is yet a farther and a more diſtinguiſhing mark of God's goodneſs to us, that every man is aſſur'd, not only of a reward, but of *his own reward, according to his own labour.*

Any the very leaſt ſhare and portion in the glorious inheritance of the Saints in light, is indeed ſufficient to reconcile a man to the greateſt hardſhips and difficulties of a virtuous and an holy life: but the ſure proſpect of more abundant and exceeding glory, as the recompence of a more rais'd and exalted pitch of holineſs, muſt be allow'd to carry ſtill greater degrees of comfort and encouragement along with it. And it cannot be denied, but that the moſt natural and prevailing motive to make men grow in grace and goodneſs, is a well-grounded confidence, that the greatneſs of their reward will be proportion'd to the greatneſs of their attainments; and that they who are holieſt in this world, ſhall be happieſt in the next.

Had we been plainly taught in Scripture, that there will be no difference or diſproportion between the happineſs of the bleſt in heaven; but that the weak and the ſtrong in faith, the *babe in Chriſt*, and *the man of God throughly furniſhed unto good works*, ſhall be all equally and alike rewarded with the ſame meaſure and degree of bliſs and glory; ſome men, fond of their eaſe, and ſtrongly addicted to the pleaſures of this life, would have been too apt to have deferr'd their repentance from time to time; and would hardly have been perſwaded to have come and wrought in the Lord's vineyard, even until the laſt hour. But theſe ſeeming arguments in favour of a late and imperfect piety, can be of no weight with one of a generous and ingenuous mind, who conſiders that tho' a late penitent, and a weak Chriſtian, may, by the great mercy of God, be admitted into heaven; yet he hath no reaſon to expect the ſame ſhare and degree of happineſs with thoſe, who have been engag'd in an early courſe of piety; *who have born the heat and burden of the day*, and with an unſhaken conſtancy and vigour have perſever'd unto the end. The hope of receiving any reward from the hands of God is ſufficient to perſwade a man, how late ſoever he begins, to ſet about his work with gladneſs. But ſurely we ſhall be more ſollicitous to ſet out betimes, and ſhall with greater eagerneſs *preſs forward toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling ing of God in Chriſt Jeſus*, when we conſider that we have a crown, a more exceeding crown of glory in our eye; and remember that *every man ſhall receive his own reward, according to his own labour*.

In ſpeaking to which words I ſhall ſhew,

I. How good grounds we have to believe, that different men will receive a different reward in heaven.

II. That this reward will be allotted to every man, according to his own labour.

Firſt Then we have good grounds to believe, that different men 1 Cor. 15. 41, 42. will receive a different reward in heaven. For as *there is one glory of the ſun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the ſtars; ſo alſo is the reſurrection of the dead*: thoſe that are rais'd to everlaſting life ſhall indeed be all glorious, but ſtill the glory of ſome ſhall be greater than that of others. Upon the ſtrength of this principle St. *Paul* earneſtly 2 Cor. 9. 6. preſſes his *Corinthians* to liberality and munificence; *he that ſoweth ſparingly*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *ſhall reap alſo ſparingly; and he that ſoweth bountifully, ſhall reap alſo bountifully*. To different degrees of charity St. *Paul* here plainly allots a different reward. The more diſintereſted, the more extenſive, the more uſeful is our good-will to men, the more plenteouſly *ſhall we reap in due ſeaſon, if we faint not*; the greater meaſure of grace ſhall we receive here, the greater degree of glory ſhall we obtain hereafter.

John 14. 2. Our Saviour informs us, that *in his Father's houſe are many manſions*; and ſome of the higheſt places in thoſe heavenly habitations the Dan. 12. 3. Prophet *Daniel* hath appropriated to thoſe, *who convert ſinners from the error of their ways*: *They that be wiſe*, ſaith he, *ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteouſneſs, as the ſtars for ever and ever*. The perſons that reclaim ſinners are, by the Prophet, evidently diſtinguiſh'd from the ſinners whom they reclaim; and are here therefore entitled to a particular degree of glory, of which the others have no promiſe made them. When the ſons of *Zebedee* Mark 10. 37. requeſted their Maſter, that they might *ſit the one on his right hand, and the other on his left in his kingdom,* our Lord, we find, tho' he doth not promiſe this degree of eminence and authority to them, doth yet plainly aſſert, that it ſhall be given to ſome of his followers, v. 10. even *to thoſe for whom it is prepared of his father*. By our Saviour we are told of *a Prophet's, and of a righteous man's reward*, of the firſt and of the laſt, of the greateſt and of the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven. And from theſe expreſſions therefore, and many others of the like importance, we may reaſonably conclude, that, in the future ſtate, the glory of ſome will be more bright and illuſtrious than that of others. To confirm us farther in the belief of this doctrine, we may obſerve, that

that there are ſeveral ranks and orders of good men, to whom, in a peculiar and eſpecial manner, more than ordinary degrees of happineſs are promis'd in the Scripture. Of the Prophets under the Old Teſtament we read, that *God is not aſhamed to be called their God*, theirs in a more than ordinary and diſtinguiſhing manner, and that *he hath prepar'd for them a city*. And to the Apoſtles our bleſſed Saviour thus addreſſeth himſelf in theſe remarkable works; *Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations*; *and I appoint unto you a kingdom, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and ſit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael.* Now how difficult ſoever it may be nicely to determine the full and juſt meaning of theſe expreſſions; yet, certainly, we may very rationally infer from them that there are ſome particular marks and inſtances of glory, with which the Apoſtles of our Lord will be honour'd above other Chriſtians. And to this, it is probable, St. *John* alludes, when, in his deſcription of *Jeruſalem* the holy city, he particularly obſerves, that *the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apoſtles of the Lamb.* St. *Paul*, in his Epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians*, breaks out into joy upon the view of that glory, which at the day of judgment would redound to him from the ſucceſs of his miniſtry among them: *For what is our hope*, ſays the Apoſtle, *or joy, or crown of rejoycing? Are not even ye in the preſence of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy*; our's in a peculiar and incommunicable manner; our's in diſtinction not only to other Chriſtians, but even to the reſt of the Apoſtles.

Heb. 11. 16.

Luk. 22. 28, 29, 30.

Rev. 21. 14.

1 Theſſ. 2. 19.

AND as from what hath been ſaid we have juſt reaſon to believe, that the Apoſtles will be rewarded with ſome additional degree of glory, beſides that which they ſhall enjoy in common with other Saints; ſo may we, by plain parity of reaſon, conclude, that they who come neareſt to the Apoſtles in an unſhaken faith, and an exemplary holineſs, will be next them likewiſe in happineſs and glory. The blood of Chriſt, 'tis true, is alike ſufficient, and was alike ſhed, for all men: but we can no more infer from thence, that the rewards purchas'd by that blood will be alike beſtow'd on all, than we can, that the ſame degrees of holineſs and ſanctification will, thro' the efficacy of that blood, be alike communicated to all. Notwithſtanding the extenſive virtue and ſufficiency of Chriſt's death, which is equally imputed to all good Chriſtians, there are, 'tis certain, very different degrees of holineſs among good men in this life; and there will therefore, we may reaſonably preſume, be a proportionable difference between their happineſs in the next. They may, 'tis poſſible, be made all equally holy in the other world; but it doth not even from thence neceſſarily follow, that they will be all equally happy there, ſince men's happineſs hereafter will be proportion'd, not to their future, but to their preſent holineſs; not to thoſe good qualities, with which they ſhall be endued when they are in heaven, but to thoſe which they were maſters of before they were admitted therein. True it is, all the bleſt are alike children of God, heirs of Chriſt, members of his body; but 'tis as true alſo, that all children have not the ſame proviſion, all heirs are not entitled to the ſame inheritance, all members have not the ſame honour; all *the righteous*, we readily allow, ſhall ſhine forth with an unſpeakable luſtre in the kingdom of their Father; but, notwithſtanding this, one Saint may ſtill differ from another Saint in glory. We thankfully acknowledge, that the Saints in heaven will, thro' the great goodneſs of God, be all perfectly, tho' we deny that they will be all equally, happy: They may be all fill'd to their utmoſt capacity, and yet, their capacities being unequal, ſome may receive a greater meaſure and proportion than others. What is ſaid of the Manna which came down from heaven, may be Exod. 16. 18. apply'd to the happineſs which we ſhall poſſeſs there; *He that gathereth much, ſhall have nothing over, and he that gathereth little, ſhall have no lack.* In this lower world, 'tis true, the narrow-hearted are apt to repine at each other's gain, and the ambitious to envy the promotion, ſplendor, and glory, which ſome poſſeſs above others: but where there is no envy, and ſure we are there can be none in thoſe peaceful regions which are above, the greater happineſs of another can by no means be thought to diminiſh any one's joy; nor can it be fear'd, that the exalted bliſs of others ſhould impair or diſturb the felicity of any the leaſt Saint in that bleſſed place, where every one will reliſh his own happineſs the more, becauſe others abound in theirs.

From the account that is given us of the holy angels in Scripture, we have juſt grounds to think, that there are ſeveral ranks and orders among them, ſome more excellent and honourable than others; and yet no one hath any doubt, but that they are all perfectly and compleatly happy. And if the inequality of thoſe bleſſed ſpirits doth no way detract from the perfection of their bliſs, we may juſtly ſatisfie our ſelves, that that difference of rewards, which I have been endeavouring to prove, doth not in the leaſt derogate from the compleat and Pſal. 8. 5. conſummate happineſs of men, who, tho' *they were made but a little lower*, are yet ſtill lower, *than the angels*. From what hath been advanc'd upon this head we may venture to conclude, that different men, will, as we have good reaſon to think, receive a different reward in heaven. I proceed therefore to ſhew you, in the

Second Place, that this reward will be allotted to every man, *according to his own labour*.

It is obſervable, that the Apoſtle doth not here ſay we ſhall be rewarded for the ſake, and on the account of our labour, but *according to it*. For properly ſpeaking, and in ſtrict juſtice, the moſt holy and perfect man upon earth cannot be ſaid to merit or deſerve the very loweſt degree of glory. The leaſt reward in heaven will be an happineſs that is eternal; and there is no proportion between an eternal reward and a ſhort momentary ſervice, tho' it be that of the beſt of Saints. Our holineſs it ſelf is the free gift of God, as well as that eternal life, which ſome men would arrogantly preſume to claim on the account of that holineſs: the good actions we do are thankfully to be aſcrib'd to the cooperating and aſſiſting grace of God: our very labour is not perfectly our own; and much leſs, therefore, can that reward be ſaid in ſtrict juſtice to be ours, which, were we never ſo much maſters of our own actions, we could not of right challenge or expect. But tho' we dare not preſume to appeal to God's juſtice, yet we may, with an humble confidence, rely upon his mercy; tho' we cannot juſtly challenge any reward from God, yet *God*, we know, *will not forget our work and labour of love*; tho' our labour be not properly our own, yet we are ſure, that *whilſt we labour in the Lord, we cannot labour in vain*; tho' our good works are not the cauſe for the ſake of which, yet they are the conditions upon the performance of which, we ſhall receive our recompence; tho', after all that we can do, we are ſtill but unprofitable ſervants, yet, if we do all we can, we *ſhall in no wiſe loſe*

our

our reward: and this reward, tho' it be not merited by our own labour, ſhall yet, as the Apoſtle expreſly aſſerts, be allotted us *according to it*. And of this we have a plain proof in the parable of the talents, where our Lord, under the ſimilitude of a certain nobleman going into a far country, allots a different reward to every man in proportion to the different improvement he had made of the talents, committed to his care. To the good ſervant, whoſe *pound had gain'd ten pounds*, our Lord thus addreſſes himſelf, *Well, thou good ſervant, becauſe thou haſt been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And when the ſecond came, ſaying, Lord, thy pound hath gain'd five pounds, he ſaid likewiſe to him, be thou alſo over five cities.* In this parable we have a diſtinction clearly made between theſe two ſervants, tho' they were both of them truly juſt and faithful to their Lord; and in the ſame parable we are plainly directed to that rule and meaſure, according to which theſe different rewards were proportion'd. Concerning theſe two ſervants we are here told, that they were both diligent, and both therefore were to be rewarded for their diligence; but the diligence of the one had far exceeded that of the other, and his reward therefore is, we ſee, proportionably greater. Luk. 19. 12, &c.

THAT by the nobleman mention'd in this parable our Lord himſelf is here to be underſtood, is what all men readily acknowledge; and that by thoſe rewards, which this nobleman here allots to his ſervants, are meant thoſe which our Saviour will diſpenſe at the great day of judgment, is alike certain, tho' all men are not equally agreed to think ſo. By theſe ſeveral rewards ſome interpreters underſtand only thoſe different meaſures of divine grace, which God communicates to believers in this life. Now that theſe rewards were deſign'd to repreſent this grace, we are far from denying; but that they may and ought to be extended farther, even to that glory which our Saviour will diſpenſe at the laſt day, we have, we think, juſt reaſon to gather from the plain deſign, and expreſs aſſertions, of the parable. For by the nobleman's going into a far country, returning after a long time, and then calling his ſervants to an account, what can we underſtand leſs than our Lord's aſcending up into heaven, and coming again at the laſt day to judge the world? But St. *Matthew*, in his relation of this parable, expreſſes himſelf in words leſs liable to ambiguity, and makes it ſtill more plain, that what is here ſaid muſt be underſtood with relation to the day of judgment. For to the good ſervant the Lord of that ſervant there addreſſes himſelf in theſe encouraging words, *enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*; and concerning the wicked ſervant 'tis there expreſly ſaid, *caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into outer darkneſs*; *there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.* Mat. 25. 21. v. 30.

SINCE therefore the rewards mention'd in this parable muſt neceſſarily be underſtood of thoſe, which are to be given at the day of judgment, it follows evidently from hence, that at that day men will receive different rewards from God, in proportion to the different improvement they have made of thoſe gifts and graces, which he hath vouchſaf'd to them. To this purpoſe our Saviour ſeems to ſpeak, *Mat.* 19. 29. where, to encourage thoſe that might ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake, he is graciouſly pleas'd to make this moſt comfortable declaration; *Every one that hath forſaken houſes, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's ſake, ſhall receive an hundred-fold.* And St. *Peter*, 'tis probable, had this ex-

ceeding glory in his view, when, ſpeaking to our Lord of himſelf and the
v. 27. reſt of the Apoſtles, he ſays, *Behold, we have forſaken all, and follow'd thee; what ſhall we have therefore?*

THERE is indeed one place in Scripture, which may ſeem, at firſt view, to overthrow the doctrine we are here eſtabliſhing; and that is in the 20th chapter of St. *Matthew*, where *the Lord of the vineyard*
v. 12. pays all his labourers alike, *and makes thoſe who had wrought there but one hour, equal unto them who had born the heat and burden of the day.* But if we look into this parable, we ſhall ſoon find, that the pay here given muſt neceſſarily be underſtood of the gift of grace, and cannot poſſibly be extended to the fruition of glory; for the wages here mention'd are given to the envious and unthankful, even to thoſe of whom it is expreſsly ſaid, that *they are not choſen.* The kingdom of heaven mention'd in this parable is the kingdom of grace, not that of glory: all men, without any regard to their own works, have here a tender of ſufficient grace made them; but *the glory which ſhall be reveal'd* hereafter, will be proportion'd to the uſe they have made of that grace, which God hath mercifully vouchſaf'd them. It is often urg'd as an argument againſt the groundleſs hopes of ſinners, that, ſhould they be admitted into heaven with their evil habits and diſpoſitions about them, they would be there inſenſible and uncapable of bliſs, and ſoon find themſelves miſerable even in the midſt of happineſs. Now, if there be any force in this way of reaſoning, it will prove as well, that different degrees of holineſs will qualifie men for different degrees of happineſs, as it doth, that ſome degrees of holineſs are neceſſary to make men capable of any the leaſt meaſure of happineſs. For if a pure ſpiritual mind, free from carnal luſts and paſſions, be abſolutely neceſſary to put us into a fit capacity of reliſhing thoſe refin'd joys that are above, it will from hence naturally follow, that the more ſpiritualiz'd, rais'd, and exalted theſe diſpoſitions are, the quicker, the ſtronger, the more pleaſing will be our taſt of thoſe heavenly pleaſures, and conſequently the greater, the more enlarg'd, the more comprehenſive will our happineſs be.

WHAT hath been ſaid concerning the different rewards of good men in the future life, and concerning that rule and ſtandard according to which theſe rewards are to be adjuſted, is not to be look'd upon as a bare, ſpeculative, unedifying doctrine, deſign'd only to entertain our thoughts, and gratifie our curioſity, but as a practical, inſtructive, uſeful truth, ſuch as is deliver'd to us in the holy Scriptures, and ſuch as ought therefore to be us'd by us as a proper motive to animate our endeavours, and quicken our progreſs in the ways of holineſs. Our life or death indeed will be determin'd according to the final ſtate in which we die; but the degrees of our happineſs or miſery will be proportion'd to the meaſures of our righteouſneſs or wickedneſs. How numerous, how provoking, how much aggravated ſoever our ſins have been, yet, if we truly repent of them, they will not, we are aſſur'd, riſe up againſt us in order to our condemnation; but they may leſſen our reward, they may diminiſh our happineſs, they may detract from our glory: and they will certainly do ſo, if we do not redeem the time that we have loſt; if we do not double our diligence, and by an active, induſtrious, indefatigable goodneſs, recover our ground, and preſs forward with renew'd ſpeed toward the prize.

There is no temptation which doth more frequently overtake us, none which more uſually betrays us into the practice of ſin, than the fond hopes of repenting afterwards, and an ill-grounded preſumption of making our peace with God a little *before we go hence, and be no more ſeen.* But if we would often and ſeriouſly conſider, that tho' we were never ſo ſure of time, and opportunity, and will, to repent hereafter, yet we ſhall by this conduct neceſſarily fall ſhort of many degrees of glory, which we might otherwiſe have juſt reaſon to expect; this conſideration, one would think, ſhould be ſufficient to convince us of the advantages of an early piety, an univerſal obedience, an uninterrupted ſtate of righteouſneſs. Let the life we ſpend in the fear and ſervice of God be never ſo long, there are rewards in heaven that will abundantly recompenſe our labour: if we have begun earlier, and labour'd harder than other men, we have juſt cauſe to be encourag'd within our ſelves; ſince for this very reaſon we ſhall receive a more abundant reward than they. In running our Chriſtian race we need not fear that we ſhall ſtart too ſoon, or make too much haſte: let us ſet out never ſo early, and go on with never ſo great ſpeed, we ſhall have ſtill more ground to run; and the greater lengths we go, the more valuable, the more honourable, the more glorious will our prize be. We cannot poſſibly be too ambitious, too covetous, or voluptuous, in regard to the honours, riches, and pleaſures of another world: in this ſenſe, we may *love the uppermoſt rooms, and the chief ſeats*; we may *covet earneſtly the beſt gifts*, we may innocently *make haſte to be rich, and let no degree of pleaſure paſs by us.*

When the diſciples of our Lord had a ſtrife among themſelves, which of them ſhould be greateſt in this world, their Lord, we find, reproves them for their pride, and condemns their ambition: but had the ſame zeal been employ'd in qualifying them for the moſt exalted degrees of eminence and authority in the kingdom of heaven, there would then have been no danger of their falling out with one another, or of diſpleaſing their Lord; they would then have had no ſtrife among themſelves, nor any rebuke from their Maſter. The ſucceſs we meet with in our endeavours after the things here below, is not always proportion'd to the pains we have been at in procuring them; nay, is very often the leſs on the account of thoſe very pains: but the ſooner we engage our ſelves, the more time we ſpend, the harder we labour, in the purſuit of eternal happineſs, the ſurer we are to obtain what we aim at, and the more fully will it anſwer our expectations, when obtain'd.

But tho' this doctrine does, we ſee, clearly afford the greateſt encouragement to an early piety, yet does it by no means tend to diſcourage a ſincere, however late, repentance. God, in his great wiſdom and goodneſs, hath ſo order'd his rewards, that even they who are leaſt happy, will be ſufficiently happy; and tho' a late penitent hath not ordinarily any reaſon to expect a degree of glory equal to his, who never ſwerv'd from his duty, or quickly return'd to it; yet if he wiſely manages this laſt opportunity that is left him; if he does all that poſſibly he can in that little time that he hath; if he improves to the utmoſt advantage every moment of his laſt hour; even this his work ſhall not be loſt; he alſo ſhall be rewarded *according to his own labour*; his bliſs ſhall be perfect, tho' it be not the moſt exalted; and tho' he be leſs happy than ſome other Chriſtians, yet he ſhall be much happier than he deſerves. A juſt conſideration of the inequality of the future rewards will be ſo far from driving him into deſpair, that it hath a much more natural tendency to ſupport and comfort him. Had God but one bleſſing to beſtow, he might be apt to fear that he had juſtly forfeited that; but ſince the Almighty hath graciouſly declar'd, that he will *reward every man according to his own labour,* he may with the greater confidence ſpeak ſome degrees of comfort to himſelf, whilſt he paſſionately cries out in the words of *Eſau, Bleſs me, even me alſo, O my Father.* Gen. 27. 34.

AND as this doctrine is thus ſerviceable to the late penitent, and to the early Chriſtian; ſo is it equally of uſe to all other men, in all other circumſtances and conditions of life. A frequent reflection upon the different rewards of the other world, will make proſperity leſs dangerous to him who enjoys it, and adverſity more tolerable to him who labours under it: the one will employ his wealth and power in laying up for himſelf a treaſure in heaven; and the miſeries of the other will ſit the eaſier upon him, when he takes a view of thoſe higher degrees of pleaſure, to which, if he endures them with Chriſtian patience, they will entitle him.

SINCE therefore we may all make ſo good an uſe of conſidering the different rewards of the other life, let us not be wanting to our ſelves in neglecting to conſider them: let us frequently think upon that great day, in which we ſhall be all call'd to give an account, what uſe we have made of thoſe talents that have been entruſted with us: and let this conſideration prevail with us to make the utmoſt improvement that we can of thoſe gifts and graces, which have been vouchſaf'd to us; that, when Chriſt ſhall come in his glory to give to every man according to his work, *we alſo may receive our own reward, according to our own labour.*

SERMON XLVI.

Puniſhments proportionable to Sins.

Matth. XI. 22.

But I ſay unto you it ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

WE have here a moſt ſevere and terrible threatning denounc'd by Chriſt himſelf againſt the impenitent and unbelieving *Jews*; men ſo immers'd in their wickedneſs, ſo ſunk and debas'd by it, that neither the mighty works which our Lord had done among them, nor his unſpotted life, nor that heavenly doctrine which he taught them, nor that inimitable eloquence with which he deliver'd it, were any way effectual to turn them to repentance, and to bring them to the knowledge of the truth. To give them a juſt ſenſe of their obſtinacy, to convince them of, and, if it were poſſible, to ſhame them out of, their folly and diſingenuity, our Lord here upbraids them with the examples of the heathen world, the people of *Tyre* and *Sidon*; men who *ſat in darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death*, being given up to idolatry, exceedingly wicked, and, which was ſtill a more humbling conſideration, in a particular manner hated and deſpis'd by the *Jews*. *Wo unto thee* Matt. 11. 21. *Chorazin, wo unto thee Bethſaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in ſackcloth and aſhes.* In which words our Lord, we ſee, doth not wholly excuſe thoſe wicked Gentiles; but neither doth he charge them with ſo great a degree of guilt, as he doth the unbelieving *Jews*. The Gentiles groſs ignorance of their duty might in ſome meaſure have been avoided by them, and was therefore juſtly to be imputed to them; but they had not the ſame opportunities and advantages of improving their knowledge, they had not the ſame means of conviction, they had not the ſame motives to reformation and amendment of life, as thoſe men unto whom the Goſpel had been preach'd; and therefore, upon this account, our Lord is graciouſly pleas'd to make them as it were ſome ſort of allowance and abatement. They are here repreſented not indeed as entirely blameleſs; but ſtill as leſs blameable than others: they are not exempted from thoſe ſufferings that were due unto their ſins; but theſe ſufferings, we are told, ſhall be leſs ſevere than thoſe which will be inflicted upon greater ſinners: *It ſhall be more tolerable*, ſays our Lord to the Jews, *for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.*

In ſpeaking to which words I ſhall ſhew,

I. That in the next world ſome ſinners will be more ſeverely puniſh'd than others.
II. I shall enquire what thoſe ſins are, which will expoſe men to the ſevereſt puniſhments.
III. I shall draw an inference or two from the whole, and ſo conclude.

Firſt Then I am to ſhew, that in the next world ſome ſinners will be more ſeverely puniſh'd than others: and this I ſhall endeavour to make out, both from reaſon and from revelation.

And 1*ſt*, tho' this doctrine concerning the inequality of future torments had not been expreſsly reveal'd to us in the Word of God, yet our own reaſon alone would have inclin'd us to have believ'd it; for the ſame arguments that are brought to prove, that any puniſhments ſhall hereafter be inflicted upon any ſinners, may alſo be urg'd to ſhew, that ſome ſinners ſhall have a greater ſhare in thoſe puniſhments than others: the ſame vindictive juſtice of God, which inclines him to puniſh the ſins of the impenitent, diſpoſes him likewiſe to obſerve ſome proportion in his puniſhments, and to allot the greateſt degrees of miſery to the greateſt degrees of guilt. A man can hardly conceive any thing of God with more aſſurance, than that he will deal with every one according to his works; and that his rewards and puniſhments will be exactly adjuſted to the deſert or to the demerits of his creatures. Now it is certain that ſome men are greater ſinners than others; and it is therefore reaſonable to conclude, that the juſt Judge of heaven and earth will proportion their ſufferings according to the different malignity of their ſins. This proportion, we are ſure, is not conſtantly obſerv'd in the diſpenſations of God's providence here in this world; and we have therefore the more reaſon to think that it will take place, and unexceptionably be made manifeſt, in the next. Some ſinners, we know, are ſometimes overtaken by temporal puniſhments, and not ſuffer'd to live out half their days; whilſt others, who have been more notorious for the guilt and aggravation of their ſins, have yet been permitted to live quietly here in this world, and to go out of it without any viſible marks of the divine wrath and vengeance. Now if we conſider the impartial juſtice, and the unſpotted holineſs of God, we cannot allow our ſelves to think, that theſe things ſhall continue always as they are; but muſt neceſſarily be inclin'd to believe, that theſe ſeeming inequalities of God's providence ſhall be ſet right hereafter; and that therefore thoſe flagrant ſinners, who have been the leaſt ſufferers in the world that now is, ſhall be the greateſt in that which is to come.

It is generally agreed by moſt Chriſtians, and hath lately been made out unto you, that there ſhall be different degrees of happineſs in heaven; and that in the future ſtate one Saint ſhall differ from another Saint in glory. Now thoſe arguments, that are of ſufficient force to prove the difference of the rewards which ſhall be beſtow'd on good men, are of ſtill greater force to evince the inequality of thoſe torments, which ſhall be inflicted on the wicked. For tho' it may be ſaid that God, who can undoubtedly do what he will with his own, may, if he pleaſes, without any impeachment of his juſtice, freely beſtow the largeſt meaſure of happineſs upon the loweſt degrees of holineſs; yet it doth not ſeem conſiſtent with the beſt notions we can form of the divine juſtice, to imagine that he will inflict the moſt bitter, and the ſevereſt torments upon the loweſt and moſt excuſable degrees of guilt. God may and will beſtow upon his faithful ſervants infinite degrees of happineſs, above and beyond their merits; but we cannot entertain ſuch harſh notions of the Deity, as to think that he will inflict on any ſinner an higher penalty than his ſins have properly and ſtrictly deſerv'd. Now 'tis certain that ſome ſinners have not deſerv'd ſo great a degree of puniſhment as others; and 'tis therefore reaſonable to believe that thoſe others ſhall be more grievouſly tormented. If all ſinners were to be equally and alike tormented, it muſt follow, either that thoſe men, who are the leaſt ſinners, ſhall ſuffer thoſe torments which are due unto the greateſt; or elſe that the moſt enormous ſinners ſhall have the rigour of their ſentence mitigated and abated, and have no more puniſhment inflicted on them, than what is ſtrictly and properly due to the very leaſt offender. But now we have already ſeen, that the leaſt ſinner cannot in juſtice be puniſh'd with that degree of miſery, which is due only unto the greateſt; and what reaſon can we have to think, that the moſt enormous ſinner will have any part of his deſerv'd puniſhment abated? And that God will ſhew that favour to the perſons who have moſt provok'd him, which he denies to thoſe who have leaſt offended him? Is it conſiſtent with the divine wiſdom and juſtice, that thoſe men, whoſe iniquities have been the greateſt, ſhall be the ſole objects of God's pity and compaſſion; whilſt thoſe who have been leſs wicked, *ſhall receive judgment without mercy*?

Those civil penalties, which are affix'd to the breach of human laws, are not perhaps always exactly proportion'd to the different degrees of guilt in the offender. Murder is, no doubt, a more heinous ſin than theft; and there may be greater aggravations, more malice, more wilfulneſs, more cruelty, in one thief or in one murderer than in another; and yet the puniſhments that are allotted to theſe different degrees of ſin are, it muſt be confeſs'd, here below, very often equal and the ſame. But we have not from hence any colour of a pretence to infer, that God will obſerve the ſame method with ſinners in the courſe of his divine juſtice. For men cannot poſſibly judge exactly of thoſe inward thoughts, deſigns, and diſpoſitions of mind, which go a great way toward determining the proper and diſtinguiſhing guilt of each offender; and could they be fully appriz'd of theſe things, yet ſtill they would want power nicely to proportion the juſt meaſure of puniſhment to the different degrees of guilt. Death, even in its moſt frightful and aſtoniſhing ſhape, is much too little a puniſhment for ſome criminals; and yet this is the greateſt penalty which human law-givers can pretend to award. The men of this world, when they have kill'd the body, have no more that they can do; and therefore when any ſinners have tranſgreſs'd to ſo high a pitch, as to incur the penalty of death, how different ſoever their guilt be, human laws muſt neceſſarily have but one and the ſame puniſhment, diverſified perhaps a little in the manner of it, for all capital crimes. But now the moſt minute difference in the degrees of guilt muſt needs be naked and open to that God, who is omniſcience it ſelf; nor can there be any want of power in that Being, which is omnipotent, to inflict thoſe diſtinct puniſhments, which are peculiarly due to each particular offender.

Now if God can thoroughly diſtinguiſh between the different guilt of each tranſgreſſor; if he is abundantly able to puniſh every ſinner according to his iniquity; and if his great wiſdom and juſtice do manifeſtly incline him to this way of proceeding; we have from hence ſufficient grounds to believe, that in the next world ſome ſinners ſhall be more ſeverely puniſh'd than others. But tho' the juſtice of God were not ſo clearly intereſſed in this matter, yet theſe future puniſhments do themſelves ſuggeſt to us this doctrine; and from the nature of them we may very reaſonably infer their inequality. One great part of the puniſhment of hell conſiſts in the remorſe of conſcience ariſing from the ſenſe of guilt; and therefore, where the greateſt guilt is, there muſt be the greateſt remorſe, that is, the greateſt puniſhment, from the ſenſe of it. The continual and uninterrupted anguiſh of an accuſing and ſelf-condemning conſcience, how little impreſſion ſoever it may now make upon careleſs and unthinking ſinners, does really carry ſo much miſery and terrour in it, that ſome men have thought, that the ſtrongeſt and moſt forcible expreſſions concerning the future torments are thoroughly and fully anſwer'd by it. But tho' we may not think with thoſe men, that remorſe of conſcience will be the only puniſhment of the damn'd; yet, if we look a little into the nature of it, we ſhall be forc'd to think that this will be a very conſiderable part of their puniſhment. The reproaches of an awaken'd and guilty conſcience are, even in this life, moſt terrifying and afflicting; and have ſunk ſo deep upon ſome men, and have ſo pierc'd them to the quick, that they have made even death their wiſh, their ſanctuary, their aim, and have been *exceeding glad when they have found the grave*. And yet, whilſt men are here in this world, they have a great many ways to divert and interrupt theſe bitter reproaches; there is ſtill room for hope, and they may ſtill deceive themſelves with the fruitleſs expectations of a future repentance and reformation. But when they are once paſs'd into another world, theſe torments are unallay'd, and unintermitted; their thoughts are always awake and upon the ſtretch, and ſtill bent and employ'd in the mortifying conſideration of their own ſin and folly.

Now if the torments of a damn'd ſinner do, in a great meaſure, conſiſt in a bitter reflection upon his own paſt folly and ingratitude; the more fooliſh and ungrateful he has been, the more heavily will this reflection ſit upon him, the more ſenſibly will it touch him, the more grievouſly will it torment him. When he conſiders, and he will be always conſidering, thoſe many opportunities he had of knowing his duty, and thoſe mighty aſſiſtances that were offer'd him, to enable him to perform it, a mercy not equally vouchſaf'd to all men, the ſenſe of his miſery muſt needs be encreas'd and multiply'd in proportion to thoſe divine favours and advantages which he hath ſo wilfully neglected and deſpis'd. All ſinners will, no doubt, be extremely and inſupportably miſerable, upon the view of their being for ever excluded from the *preſence of God*, and from the fruition of thoſe *pleaſures, that are at his right hand for evermore*. But we have no reaſon to think, that the

ſenſe

ſenſe of this loſs will afflict each particular unhappy ſoul equally, and in the ſame degree: we have rather ſufficient grounds to believe that thoſe *who were aliens from the common-wealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers to the covenant of grace*, will be leſs tormented by this conſideration, than thoſe who had the benefit either of the Law or of the Goſpel, to guide and direct them in the way to heaven. For how deplorable above meaſure muſt their condition be, how particularly ſevere muſt be their torments, who are conſtantly employ'd in conſidering what a fair capacity they were once in; what particular opportunities they once had of enjoying that God and thoſe pleaſures, which they muſt now loſe for ever? The more frequent calls and invitations a man has had to repentance here in this world, the more wilfully and preſumptuouſly he hath neglected theſe means of grace, and the more he hath reſiſted the good motions of the holy Spirit of God, the greater will his remorſe be, and the more terrible his puniſhment; the more will he be torn by the *worm which never dies*, the more furiouſly will the *fire which ſhall never be quench'd* prey upon him. All the anxious and tormenting paſſions ſhall indeed be let looſe upon every impenitent and condemn'd ſinner; ſhame, ſorrow, deſpair, fury, hatred, and revenge, ſhall at once diſtract and torment every loſt ſoul. But theſe paſſions are as much capable of degrees in the other world, as they are in this; and the more ſcandalouſly a man has miſplac'd and miſemploy'd them, the more ſinfully he has indulg'd them, the more irregularly he has abus'd them here in this world, the more ſeverely will they uſe him, the more grievouſly will they afflict him, the more intolerably will they torment him hereafter in the next.

ANOTHER argument to prove the inequality of future torments may be this, namely, that envy, malice, and other vices, are not only by the order of God attended with puniſhments, but in the nature of the thing neceſſarily create torment: and therefore, where theſe are in the moſt eminent degree, they muſt neceſſarily create the greateſt torment.

THOSE evil habits and diſpoſitions of mind, which a man hath encourag'd and indulg'd here in this world, will go along with him and torment him in the next. He that hath been envious and malicious here, will be envious and malicious there; *he that hath been filthy, will be filthy ſtill.* Now the more vicious any one hath been, the more he muſt conſequently have of that uneaſineſs and torment, which naturally attends vice. Holineſs and virtue is not only the condition, upon the performance of which our title to the happineſs of heaven doth depend; but doth it ſelf alſo make up and conſtitute one great part of our happineſs there. And in like manner ſin will not only carry us to hell, but will alſo be a great part of our plague and vexation there: for all our thoughts and apprehenſions of things will be then chang'd; ſin will then be ſtripp'd of all its charms and allurements; we ſhall then, when it is too late, hate and abhor both it, and our ſelves for it.

NOW if ſin hath in it a natural tendency to produce uneaſineſs and pain; and if the greateſt ſins are of themſelves, and in their own nature, apt to cauſe the greateſt miſery; and if theſe ſins are ſtill more ſure to produce this effect in the other world than they are in this; we may from hence rationally conclude, that the greater a man's ſins have been, the more ſevere will his miſery be, tho' the divine juſtice did not immediately interpoſe to proportion this puniſhment to his guilt. But that the Almighty will concern himſelf in the diſtribution of theſe puniſhments, and allot to every ſinner the particular and juſt recompence of his ſin, is a truth which will appear ſtill more evident to us, if we conſider

2dly, Those declarations God hath been pleas'd to make concerning it in his holy Word.

In the *Levitical* law God commands the magiſtrate to give the offender a certain number of ſtripes according to his fault; and our bleſſed Saviour, in his parable of the wicked ſervant, hath taught us that he will obſerve the ſame method in the diſtribution and execution of his future puniſhments. For thus we are expreſly told in the 12th chapter of St. *Luke*, v. 47, 48, *And that ſervant which knew his Lord's will, and prepar'd not himſelf, neither did according to his will, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes*; *but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of ſtripes, ſhall be beaten with few ſtripes*: *for unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall be much requir'd*; *and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* In which words we have a plain declaration of that method, by which God will proceed in the puniſhment of every particular ſinner; and are alſo inform'd of the ground and reaſon of this procedure. The two ſervants here mention'd had both of them committed things worthy of ſtripes; but the one ſinn'd againſt greater light than the other, had more knowledge of his Maſter's will, had a greater truſt repos'd in him, and is therefore, upon this account, doom'd to ſuffer the ſeverer puniſhment. What our Lord here couches under the parable of the wicked ſervant, he hath expreſly declar'd, without a figure, in the 23d chapter of St. *Matth.* v. 14. where he ſolemnly pronounces this ſevere ſentence upon the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*: *Wo unto you Scribes and Phariſees, hypocrites*; *for ye devour widows houſes, and for a pretence make long prayers*; *therefore ye ſhall receive the greater damnation.* And thus alſo he expreſly teaches us in the words of my text, where he tells the wicked inhabitants of *Chorazin* and *Bethſaida*, that *it ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for them.* For tho' the puniſhment here threatned is underſtood by ſome of thoſe temporal judgments, which were ſhortly to be inflicted on thoſe wicked cities; yet there ſeems to be no reaſon, why we ſhould exclude thoſe eternal puniſhments, which this text doth, upon the firſt reading of it, very naturally ſuggeſt to our thoughts. Beſides, this judgment is again threatned to *Capernaum* in the 24th verſe of this chapter, and there expreſs'd in a manner in no wiſe capable of this interpretation: for our Lord there ſays, *that it ſhall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for that city.* Now the city of *Sodom* had been long ſince deſtroy'd; and this threatning therefore may be more properly interpreted of that great day of judgment which is yet to come, than of that temporal calamity which was then long ago paſt. And thus having now prov'd, both from reaſon and from revelation, that, in the world to come, ſome ſinners will be more ſeverely puniſh'd than others; I proceed to enquire, in the

Second Place, what thoſe ſins are which will expoſe men to the greateſt ſufferings.

And theſe are, firſt ſuch ſins as are in their kind moſt heinous; ſuch as blaſphemy, hypocriſie, murder, bloody perſecution of God's Saints, unnatural luſts, and the like. Theſe ſins are, in the kind of them, ſo open

open and ſo provoking an affront to the great God of heaven and earth, and are beſides ſo ſhocking to human nature, and to the firſt conceptions we are us'd to form of the diſtinction between good and evil, that a man muſt have perfectly rooted out of his mind all awe of God, all ſenſe of Religion, all regard to goodneſs, before he can harbour or encourage the leaſt thoughts of them. Such prophane, and open deſpiſers of all that is good and ſacred, muſt needs be thruſt down into the loweſt place of the bottomleſs pit: *the fiery furnace will be heated ſeven times more hot* for ſuch ſinners as theſe; and it may be ſaid of them, as it is of the worſhippers of the beaſt in the *Revelation*, that they ſhall *gnaw their tongues for pain, and blaſpheme the God of heaven, becauſe of their pains.* Rev. 16. 10,11.

But ſecondly, thoſe ſins alſo will be moſt ſeverely puniſh'd, which are committed againſt the greateſt light. The ſins of Chriſtians, of reform'd Chriſtians, of thoſe of the beſt reform'd Church, the ſins of ſuch who attend continually upon the ordinances of God, and come conſtantly to be partakers of the ſupper of the Lord; ſuch men as theſe have no pretence for their iniquity, no colour or excuſe for their ſins: *If I had not come and ſpoken unto them*, ſays our Lord, *they had not had ſin*, that is, their ſin had not been ſo great; *but now they have no cloak for their ſin.* Joh. 15. 22. The ignorance, or the forgetfulneſs of our duty, tho' they will be very far from excuſing us for our tranſgreſſions, may yet be urg'd as of ſome little force for the abatement and mitigation of our crimes: but the ſinners, which we have laſt mention'd, can have no pretence of a title to either of theſe pleas: they ſin wilfully and with their eyes open, aware of the event, and in defiance of conviction; they cannot pretend to have forgot their duty, or the motives to it, whilſt they are *attending continually upon this very thing.* They have all the advantages that may be of improving their knowledge; they have all the aſſiſtance that is requiſite to enable them to perform what God requires at their hands; and, if they offend, therefore, they ſin againſt the greateſt light; they diſhonour God in the higheſt degree, and bring the greateſt ſcandal upon that Religion which they profeſs, and which, by their wicked lives and converſations, they expoſe and diſgrace.

But laſtly, thoſe men alſo have juſt reaſon to dread the ſevereſt judgments of God, who allow themſelves in ſuch ſins, as ſhew the greateſt depravity of will; habitual, deliberate, preſumptuous ſins; ſins which they take pleaſure in, and love to ſee practis'd by others. A ſingle act of ſin may be the effect of ſurpriſe, inadvertency, or a ſudden and violent paſſion: but when a man allows himſelf in the reiterated and repeated actions of any vice; when he conſiders before-hand of the propereſt methods to bring it about, and put it in practice; when he pleaſes and delights himſelf with the thoughts of accompliſhing it; goes deliberately into the commiſſion of it, and reflects upon it with pleaſure and ſatisfaction, when he hath committed it; ſuch a ſinner as this muſt needs have worn away all the ſoftneſs and tenderneſs of his conſcience; his heart muſt be harden'd, his will muſt be obſtinate, and he hath great reaſon to fear that God will not be merciful to him, *who thus offends of malicious wickedneſs. This*, as Chriſt ſpeaks, *is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil.* Joh. 3. 19. The perſons we are ſpeaking of have no lack of knowledge, but chuſe to be ignorant: they are in the number of thoſe harden'd ſinners, of whom St. *Paul* ſpeaks, *who knowing*

Rom. 1. 32. *the judgment of God, that they who commit ſuch things are worthy of death, not only do the ſame, but have pleaſure in them that do them.* Such men as theſe have not only their own, but other men's iniquities to anſwer for; nay the ſins of others are properly and in a ſtrict ſenſe theirs; and we may therefore ſay of them, as our Lord doth of the *Scribes* Matt. 23. 14. and *Phariſees, that they ſhall receive the greater damnation.*

And thus we have now ſeen what thoſe ſins are which expoſe men to the ſevereſt puniſhments; it behoves us therefore in an eſpecial manner to avoid thoſe enormous ſins, to which the higheſt penalties are annex'd. Iſai. 51. 17. It is a fearful thing to be forc'd to *drink at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury*; but 'tis far more terrible to drink, 'tis dreadful to entertain the thoughts of drinking, the very *dregs of the cup of trembling, and wringing them out.* We have been forewarn'd of thoſe ſins, which will render us obnoxious to the ſevereſt and moſt intolerable torments of the other world; and it becomes us therefore to be particularly careful, that we keep our ſelves at the utmoſt diſtance from theſe moſt heinous and crying ſins. But neither muſt we think, that we may ſafely allow our ſelves in the practice of thoſe ſins which ſeem leaſt to us; and that for theſe two reaſons,

1ſt, Because the puniſhment of theſe ſins, tho' leſs than that which is denounc'd againſt greater ſins, is yet not little, not tolerable.

2dly, Because men are apt to judge thoſe ſins little, which God eſteems great.

The puniſhment which is denounc'd, and will aſſuredly be executed upon every wilful impenitent ſinner, whether he be under the dominion of the greateſt, or of the ſmalleſt ſin, will undoubtedly be eternal. And is not an eternity of miſery a conſideration of ſufficient weight, to deter every one from having any thing to do with thoſe ſeeming *pleaſures of ſin, which are but for a ſeaſon*? Is not the leaſt ſinner con- Iſai. 33. 14. cern'd in that awakening queſtion of the Prophet, *Who amongſt you can dwell with everlaſting burnings*? Beſides, men are too apt to deceive themſelves in the judgment they are willing to form, concerning the meaſures and degrees of guilt. We are wont to eſteem ſins ſmall, only becauſe they are commonly practis'd; but neither the opinions, nor the practices of men will be of any weight to juſtifie us before *that God, who only judgeth righteous judgment.* Fornication, for inſtance, is a vice which they who take their meaſures of guilt from the practice of the world, will be apt to think to be of the ſmalleſt ſize: but he who looks into the holy Scriptures, which are the only ſure rule to judge by, will find this vice conſtantly rank'd amongſt the moſt capital ſins, and equally threatned with the ſevereſt puniſhments. In the firſt chapter of the *Romans* v. 29. we find it in the front of that black and comprehenſive catalogue of ſins, which the Apoſtle there gives us: *Being fill'd with all unrighteouſneſs, fornication, wickedneſs, covetouſneſs, maliciouſneſs,* and ſo on. And in the ſame order we may ſee it plac'd by the ſame Apoſtle, *Gal.* 5. v. 19. *Now the works of the fleſh are manifeſt, which are theſe, adultery, fornication, uncleanneſs, laſciviouſneſs* &c. In the 5th of the *Epheſians*, v. 5. we are taught that *no whoremonger ſhall have any inheritance in the kingdom of Chriſt, and of God*; and in the 21ſt of the *Revelation*, v. 8th. St. *John* alſo hath plac'd *whoremongers* amongſt thoſe enormous ſinners, who *ſhall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimſtone, which is the ſecond death.*

Now

Now from this one inſtance we may learn, that men may eaſily impoſe upon themſelves in thoſe opinions they entertain concerning the ſmallneſs of any ſin. Let us therefore carefully abſtain, not only from all flagrant and notorious ſins, but even from the leaſt kinds and meaſures of evil: let us reſolve to put our ſelves into a condition of eſcaping, not only the ſevereſt, but even the leaſt puniſhments of the future ſtate; nay, let us not content our ſelves with the hopes of being the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven; but rather let us preſs forward after the higheſt degrees of glory. Let us not think it enough that we endeavour to eſcape the torments of hell, but let it rather be our aim to *ſhine as the ſtars in the firmament for ever and ever.*

SER-

SERMON XLVII.

Brotherly Reproof.

ROM. X. 1.

The firſt Sermon on this Text.

Brethren, my heart's deſire and prayer to God for Iſrael is, *that they might be ſav'd.*

ST. *PAUL*, in the foregoing chapters, had treated of ſome doctrines, which might ſeem to bear hard upon his brethren the *Jews*: in this chapter he farther purſues the ſame ſubject, and vindicates at large the juſtice of God in rejecting the *Jews*, and taking in the Gentiles. The former look'd upon themſelves as the peculiar favourites of God; all the promiſes that had been made to *Iſrael* in the Old Teſtament, they applied according to the rigour of the letter; they were for engroſſing the ſalvation of God to thoſe of their own nation; and were unwilling to admit of any ſharers in that, which they look'd upon to be their proper and ſole inheritance. To cure them of this fond miſtake and partial opinion of themſelves, the Apoſtle, in ſeveral parts of this Epiſtle, opens very fully the true nature of the *Jewiſh* œconomy: he teaches them to diſtinguiſh betwixt the letter and the meaning of the Law; betwixt literal and myſtical Judaiſm; betwixt the ſeed of *Abraham* according to the fleſh, and the ſons of *Abraham* according to faith. He grants it to be true, that the promiſes were made to *Iſrael*; and allows farther, that the Word of God which was then given in their behalf, muſt now have its effect: but then he warns them, Rom. 9. 6, 7, 8. that *they are not all Iſrael, which are of Iſrael*; *neither becauſe they are the ſeed of Abraham, are they all children*: for tho' *they were the children of the fleſh*; yet *they were not thoſe children of the promiſe, who were to be counted for the ſeed.* Some privileges were promis'd to the *Jews*, which all who were call'd *Jews* muſt not pretend to: ſome rights by covenant pertain'd to the circumcis'd, which all of the circumciſion could not challenge. Either therefore the promiſes and covenant made by God were not kept, which it were an impeachment of the divine veracity to ſuppoſe; or by *Jews* in the promiſe, and by circumciſion in

the

the covenant, was meant ſomething more than thoſe words, in their firſt and literal ſenſe, do import.

BUT this doctrine, how well ſoever prov'd by St. *Paul,* how plainly ſoever made out by their own Law and Prophets, ſounded harſhly to a *Jewiſh* ear. For this carnal and groſs people ſtill dwelt obſtinately upon the letter of the Law, without attending to the true and ſpiritual purport of it. That heavy, unrefin'd, dull generation had no notion of a *Jew,* but what was ſo *outwardly*; *circumciſion of the heart, in the ſpirit, and not in the letter,* was a language they did not underſtand; and tho' *Moſes* and the Prophets preach'd the ſame doctrine to them which the Apoſtles did, yet, the veil intercepting betwixt the letter and the myſtery, whilſt the letter was read, the myſtery was not underſtood. Being poſſeſs'd with ſuch ſtrong prejudices againſt the Goſpel, they violently oppos'd their own ſalvation, and thoſe who were the miniſters of it. St. *Paul,* tho' their country-man and kinſman, tho' an *Hebrew,* an *Iſraelite,* of the ſeed of *Abraham,* was now become their enemy, becauſe he preach'd to them this unacceptable truth *of the partition-wall's being broken down,* and the Gentiles being admitted into the Church; and they were willing to give him the honour he deſir'd, *of filling up in his fleſh what was behind of the afflictions of Chriſt.* But he had better learn'd Chriſt than to return evil for evil: they might think it part of their religion to *love their neighbour, and to hate their enemies*; but his taught him to *love* them, *tho' his enemies*; *to bleſs them, tho' they curs'd him*; *to do good to them that hated him*; *and to pray for them which deſpitefully us'd him, and perſecuted him.* In compliance therefore with this duty, he doth here declare to the Gentile-converts his unfeign'd love, and affectionate charity towards the *Jewiſh* unbelievers; *Brethren, my heart's deſire and prayer to God for Iſrael is, that they might be ſav'd.*

Rom. 2. 28, 29.

Epheſ. 2. 14.

Col. 1. 24.

Matt. 5. 43, 44.

ST. PAUL may be conſider'd here either under the character of a Chriſtian, or an Apoſtle; and the *Jews,* either as unbelievers who oppos'd the Goſpel, or as St. *Paul's brethren and kinſmen according to the fleſh.*

IF we conſider him as a Chriſtian, and them as oppoſers of the Goſpel, we ſhall learn from his example this duty; that we are oblig'd as Chriſtians to deſire and to promote the eternal good of thoſe, who do themſelves neglect their own ſalvation.

IF we conſider him as a Chriſtian, and them as his kinſmen, we ſhall learn from his example this farther duty; that we are more particularly oblig'd to promote the ſalvation of thoſe, who are more nearly related to us.

IF we conſider him as an Apoſtle and Miniſter of the Goſpel, his example will yet farther inſtruct us, that it is the duty, as of all Chriſtians in general, ſo more particularly of the Miniſters of God's Word, to promote the ſalvation of all men.

THE proof and enforcement of theſe ſeveral duties, in the order propos'd, ſhall be the endeavour of my preſent diſcourſe.

Firſt THEN all Chriſtians are oblig'd to deſire and to promote the eternal good of thoſe, who do themſelves neglect their own ſalvation.

WE are oblig'd to promote the happineſs of each other as we are men; and we are more ſtrictly oblig'd to this duty, bound to it by ſtronger ties, and oblig'd to greater meaſures of it, as we are Chriſtians. Whether we examine our own natures, and take the meaſures of our duty from thence; or whether we look abroad, and, from the frame and order of things without us, derive rules and precepts for the direction of our own practice; or whether we conſult the lively Oracles of God, and form our ſelves by the model of the Goſpel; we ſhall find our ſelves under a ſtrict and indiſpenſable obligation to promote, by all the methods we can, and in all the inſtances we are able, the good and happineſs of others. For, upon a ſurvey of our own faculties, and a view of thoſe gifts we have receiv'd from God, we cannot but diſcover that the nature of man is ſuch, that he is both deſign'd and fitted for the offices of ſociety. There are implanted in us very ſtrong deſires of a mutual intercourſe, and reciprocation of good turns one with another; he who fram'd our nature, and beſt underſtood his own work, knew how ill ſolitude agreed with the ſoul he had breath'd into us; and therefore judg'd *it not meet for men*, whom he had form'd for a ſocial life, *to be alone.* There are many things neceſſary or convenient for us, which we have not of our ſelves; and therefore, for a ſupply of them, muſt neceſſarily fly to the aſſiſtance of others. Some therefore have built the neceſſity of our entring into ſociety purely upon our indigence, and have thought us to be ſociable creatures upon no other account, than becauſe we are not able to ſubſiſt of our ſelves. But it is a groſs miſtake to think, that our wants only and imperfections naturally induce us to ſeek communion, and fellowſhip with each other. We want ſociety, as well to vent our abundance, as to ſupply our defects; we are not more willing to ſound the notions and ſentiments of others, than we are to communicate our own; we are not more at a loſs to fill up our emptineſs, than we are to impart of our fulneſs: we do not find more pleaſure in learning, than we do in teaching, uſeful truths: nor doth he who receives a benefit find his ſoul fill'd with that joy and ſatisfaction, which poſſeſſes the mind of him who beſtows it. Should God remove us from the ſociety of intellectual beings, and place us any where in ſolitude; ſhould he there furniſh us with plenty of every thing which our nature deſires, and only deprive us of the opportunity and ſatisfaction of communicating our happineſs, and making others ſharers with us, this very want of what our ſoul, by its make and conſtitution, ſo paſſionately deſires, would ſowr all our other pleaſures, and we ſhould burſt with that ſecret joy which we could not vent.

And as there is in us this natural inclination, whereby we all deſire ſociable life and fellowſhip, ſo alſo we are furniſh'd with the proper means of maintaining this mutual union. For ſince our ſouls, whilſt they are cloath'd with fleſh, can have no immediate commerce one with another, ſuch as the holy angels and ſeparate ſpirits may be preſum'd to have, God hath been pleas'd to furniſh us with organs of ſpeech, whereby we are able to impart mutually the hidden thoughts of our ſouls. Hence is it that we are enabled to communicate our joys and our ſorrows; to give notice of our own wants, and to underſtand the wants of others; to inſtruct the ignorant, and to ask inſtruction of the wiſe; to enquire the will of God from our teachers, and to teach others who are willing to learn; to get information of the ways which lead to everlaſting life, and to inform thoſe who want a guide. Now God hath not implanted in us theſe deſires, nor given us theſe faculties, in vain; ſince there is in us ſuch a ſtrong bent towards ſociety, it is the voice of nature that we ſhould exert this propenſion in all the mutual offices of doing good; and ſince, by the gift of heaven, we are ſo well qualified

fied for theſe ſocial duties, it is the voice of God, that we ſhould uſe thoſe talents which he hath given us, to the end for which he hath deſign'd them. Thus are we inſtructed from the view of our own natures, that we ought to promote the good of others; that we are ſtrongly inclin'd to do this by a natural propenſion, and that therefore we follow the dictates of our nature, when we do it; that we are aptly fitted for this by our peculiar frame, and that therefore we anſwer the intentions of our Creator in doing it.

But if we examine our ſelves farther, and take a yet cloſer view of our inward diſpoſitions, we ſhall diſcover what obligations we have, as to promote each others good in general, ſo particularly to endeavour the good of each others ſoul. For we find in our ſelves an inſatiable deſire of all poſſible good; we find that no good we enjoy in this world is able to ſatisfie this thirſt of our ſouls; we are ſtill graſping after a more perfect and durable happineſs, and it is the conſtant queſtion we are asking, *who will ſhew us any good*? We deſire that others ſhould do us the utmoſt good they can; and we think that the utmoſt, which they themſelves would wiſh to their own ſouls. Now ſince the nature of other men is the ſame as ours; ſince there is in them as ſtrong a deſire of happineſs, as there is in us; ſince, however they may be miſtaken in their opinions of particular good and evil, they cannot but deſire the moſt ſolid and laſting happineſs; ſince, whatever their explicit deſires are, how much ſoever theſe fall ſhort of heaven, their implicit wiſhes tend to the greateſt and ſovereign good, our love to our ſelves ought to be the ſtandard and meaſure of our love to them; and if we prefer our ſouls to our bodies, our eternal to our temporal good, we ought alſo to promote their only true and durable happineſs, even the everlaſting ſalvation of their immortal ſouls. Thus far are we inſtructed in this important duty from thoſe laws, which we find written within our own breaſts; doing good to others, and doing them the greateſt good in our power, is a duty to which we are born, for which we are made, and without which we cannot give any rational account why our natures ſhould be ſo fram'd, as we find they are.

But now, if we look abroad, and take a view of that order and connexion there is betwixt the ſeveral parts of the univerſe, we ſhall find this duty of promoting the good of others written as plainly and legibly in the great book of nature, as we before found it engraven on the tables of our hearts. For do we not ſee that the ſeveral beings, which conſtitute this beautiful frame, contribute each to the good of others, and by their mutual aid and concurrence ſupport the whole? Are not all the portions of the univerſe ſo contriv'd as to afford help one to the other, and to borrow aid one from the other; and by this means to preſerve all things in their due order and harmony? It were endleſs to inſiſt on the particular correſpondence of each to each; and this would carry me into too philoſophical ſpeculations; not very proper upon this occaſion. I ſhall only obſerve that the ſeveral parts of the creation, as they are uſeful to each other, ſo they are all, by the wonderful wiſdom and goodneſs of God, ſo contriv'd, as may moſt tend to the benefit of mankind.

Now are all things thus ſerviceable to us, and is man the only unprofitable creature to man? Do *the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſhew forth his handy-work,* and is man alone ſilent in diſplaying God's glory, and manifeſting his marvellous works to thoſe Pſal. 19. 1.

of his own form and kind? Do all creatures, by their conſtant and uniform obſervance of God's law, warn ſinful man of his tranſgreſſions, and are we wanting to do this friendly and charitable office to each other? But perhaps we are not ſo willing to learn our duty from thoſe beings, which we look upon to be ſo much inferior to us; they are not upon choice, but upon neceſſity; and it may ſeem unreaſonable to tie free agents to thoſe rules and meaſures, which natural beings therefore obſerve, becauſe they cannot but obſerve. Such motives as theſe to our duty may look like popular harangues, rather than weighty and cogent arguments: paſs we on therefore from theſe creatures of a lower rank, tho' by the way the holy Scriptures do often ſend us to them for inſtruction in our duties, to thoſe immaterial and intellectual ſpirits, which are as far ſuperior in dignity to us, as we can pretend to be to the loweſt claſs of inferior creatures.

Now tho' we are in the dark as to the nature of theſe ſublime Beings, of their different ranks and orders, and the duties ariſing from each; tho' we know not what mutual offices of amity they ſhew to each other, and what peculiar homage they all pay to God; yet this we are aſſur'd of, that to us men they are the miniſters of ſalvation. The Scriptures repreſent them, as conſtantly employ'd in doing all manner of good offices to the children of men; they are not idle and unconcern'd ſpectators of the actions of mankind, but willingly intereſs themſelves in the promoting our ſpiritual welfare. When God is pleas'd to reveal his will to the inhabitants of the earth, they are preſently upon the wing to bear to us his gracious meſſages; when the glad tidings of the Goſpel are to be preach'd to all people, the heavenly hoſt are heard to ſing, *Glory to* Luk. 15. 10. *God in the higheſt, peace on earth, good-will towards men*; when a ſinner is reclaim'd from the evil of his ways, *there is joy in the preſence of the angels of God.* They are conſtantly aſcending and deſcending to carry up our petitions to the throne of God, and to convey down his bleſſings to us: they are our guardians to protect us from ſin and danger; and they do faithſully execute that charge which God hath given them, to hinder the *plague from coming nigh our dwelling, and to keep us in all our ways.* If a charitable and devout *Cornelius* wants to be inſtructed in the Goſpel, he is preſently warn'd from God by an holy angel to ſend for *Peter*, and to hear his words: if an Apoſtle be detain'd in priſon, and a ſtop put to the promulgation of the Goſpel, an angel is diſpatch'd to bid his chains fall off, and to command iron gates to be open, that the Apoſtle, and the ſaving doctrines which he preaches, may have a free and uninterrupted paſſage thro' the world. The open and viſible appearances of angels are not ſo frequent now, as in the earlier ages of the world, and in the beginnings of the Goſpel; but of their ſecret and unobſerv'd protection and aſſiſtance revelation will not permit us to doubt. What influence they have over our actions, what methods they uſe to enlighten our underſtandings, or to work upon our wills, the Scriptures no where teach us, and therefore we may not pretend to explain; only thus much we may reaſonably infer from the mercies of God, that he hath not given his good angels leſs power to do us good, than he hath to evil ſpirits to procure us harm; and if ſo, we may be ſure they are not leſs active in employing it.

Now if the angels, who are ſo much ſuperior to us, do yet condeſcend to become the miniſters of ſalvation to mankind; if they, who are in a different order of being from us, are thus aſſiduous and unwearied in promoting our eternal happineſs; then certainly the more intimate relation and affinity of nature which there is betwixt the ſons of men, obliges us to be equally vigilant in paying this reciprocal duty of love and kindneſs to the ſouls of each other. Chriſt hath propos'd them as a pattern to us; and as he hath taught us to pray, ſo he hath at the ſame time intimated it to be our duty *ſo to do God's will in earth, as it is done by them in heaven.* They do God's will in miniſtring to our ſalvation; if we therefore ſo do it as they do, we ſhall be as active in promoting the ſalvation of each other.

BUT we may carry this conſideration yet higher: we have a nobler exemplar to copy this duty from than even the holy angels themſelves. We are taught to *be perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect*; and are at the ſame time inſtructed, that this perfection of God conſiſts in his univerſal goodneſs towards men. And indeed, if we attend duly to thoſe notions we have of God, we cannot form to our ſelves any other reaſons why God ſhould make us, than that he might make us eternally happy. His glory was infinite from all eternity, as uncapable of encreaſe as of diminution, and therefore not to be augmented by the empty praiſes of his creatures, which could add nothing to him. The glory of God is therefore another expreſſion for the happineſs of men: his name is glorified by us, when we do his will; and we then do his will, when we aim at that happineſs, which God, when he made us, intended for us. Now if God therefore made us at all, that he might at laſt make us eternally happy; and if the goodneſs of God, as far as it is imitable by us, ought to be the meaſure of our's; then are we oblig'd to be merciful as God is merciful, and to cooperate with him towards the ſalvation of mankind. Matt. 5. 48.

I SHALL not here go about to diſplay all the various methods which God hath made uſe of, from the foundation of the world, towards the accompliſhing this end: that were to fathom wiſdom which is unſearchable, and to purſue *ways which are paſt finding out.* But our thoughts here naturally carry us to the great myſtery of our redemption; and whilſt I am diſcourſing of the love of God towards the ſouls of men, and the duty of men to promote the ſalvation of each other, you muſt have prevented me in having already thought of the greateſt inſtance of God's love to us, and the greateſt motive of ours to our brethren, the *giving of his only begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* But here again I ſhould enter into a boundleſs ocean, and quickly loſe both my ſelf and you, if I ſhould purſue this love of Chriſt towards the ſouls of men thro' all the inſtances and exemplifications of it. Let it ſuffice us in ſhort to obſerve, that the ſalvation of mankind was the ſole end for which Chriſt left the glories of heaven, and condeſcended to *take upon him our nature,* in the loweſt and meaneſt circumſtances; that the promoting of this was the conſtant employment of his whole life; and that for the accompliſhment of this he ſuffer'd a moſt painful and ignominious death; that whatever infinite wiſdom could contrive, whatever infinite goodneſs could undertake, whatever infinite power could bring about, hath by God incarnate been done for reſcuing men from everlaſting perdition, and ſecuring to them the fruition of everlaſting bliſs. Now *if Chriſt thus lov'd us,* the Apoſtle's inference is as eaſy as it is juſt, that *we ought alſo to love one another.* If the ſouls of men were a purchaſe Joh. 3. 16. 1. Joh. 4. 11.

worthy of the blood of Chriſt, then no man can be at too great an expence of care and labour to deliver his brother.

THERE is indeed ſcarce any article of our Creed, which doth not,
without forcing, infer our duty to promote the ſalvation of each other.
If we acknowledge God to be our Father, then are we brethren, and oblig'd
to the mutual duties of love and tenderneſs, which riſe fom that
relation. If *God made heaven and earth,* earth to be the ſcene of our
labours, and heaven to be the reward of them; then ought we joyntly
to carry on that work of our ſalvation, during our pilgrimage here upon
earth, of which we hope to be joynt-partakers and fellow-heirs in the
kingdom of heaven. If Chriſt our Lord was miraculouſly born for us;
Rom. 4. 25. if he ſuffer'd, and was crucified for us; if he *died for our ſins, and roſe
again for our juſtification*; if he deſcended into hell, and aſcended into
heaven, to promote our eternal happineſs; then ought we *all, who name
the name of Chriſt,* to carry on that great deſign, for promoting which
our Saviour was born, liv'd, and died; for the advancement of which he
both came from, and return'd to, the heavenly manſions. If he ſhall
come to judge the quick and the dead, and diſpenſe his bleſſings or curſes
according to the good we have done, or not done, to others; then is
it our intereſt to prepare our ſelves for that judgment by theſe works
of ſpiritual charity. If the holy Ghoſt is pour'd out into the hearts of
men to cleanſe and ſanctifie them to all good works; then ought we, *as*
2 Cor. 6. 1. *workers together with this Spirit,* to *beſeech* our brethren *that they receive
not the grace of God in vain.* If we profeſs our ſelves members of an
1 Cor. 12. 25. holy Catholick Church, then, as the Apoſtle argues, *all the members of
that one body ought to have the ſame care one of another*: in this conſiſts
the communion of Saints, that as they all hold the ſame head, ſo *the whole*
Epheſ. 4. 16. *body ſhould be compacted by that which every joynt ſupplies, and that
every part ſhould effectually work towards the encreaſe of the body, to
the edifying it ſelf in love.* That remiſſion of ſins, which the Goſpel
promiſes, is more peculiarly annex'd to the performance of this duty;
Jam. 5. 20. for we have the Apoſtle's authority, *that he who converts a ſinner from
his going aſtray out of the way, ſhall ſave a ſoul from death, and cover
a multitude of ſins.* Everlaſting life is the common hope of all Chriſtians;
but a more exceeding weight of glory is reſerv'd to thoſe, who
Dan. 12. 3. are the inſtruments of bringing others to heaven; and *they, who turn
many to righteouſneſs ſhall ſhine as the ſtars for ever and ever.*

THIS love to the ſouls of others, as it is always the moſt generous, ſo is it often the leaſt expenſive charity. We need not fear in this caſe leſt our abundance ſhould be leſſen'd by ſupplying the wants of others; our charity this way is ſcarce ever to be exhauſted: the more good we have done, the more we are enabled ſtill to do; and the more the partakers of our charity are, the greater our treaſure ſtill will be. Thoſe excuſes which are commonly made uſe of for being penurious in the acts of charity, will have no place here; we can neither plead poverty for our being not at all charitable, nor the fear of poverty for our being leſs charitable this way than we would. None are ſo deſtitute of the means of promoting other mens ſalvation, but may contribute to it at leaſt by their prayers; nor can any be ſo laviſh in laying themſelves wholly out upon this charitable work, as to waſte their own ſtock, which is the more multiplied, the more liberally it is expended. We may fear to enrich others with our temporal goods, leſt they abuſe the plen-

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ty we put into their hands, to our damage who enrich'd them; but we cannot be afraid that thoſe whoſe ſpiritual welfare we promote, ſhould endanger ours: the more effectually we advance their eternal intereſt, the better Chriſtians we make them, the more ſecure we are of their readineſs, and diligence, and zeal to advance our ſalvation. For we are not here engag'd in ſeparate and diſtinct intereſts; we are all members of one ſociety, and trade, if I may ſo ſay, upon a joynt ſtock; and the more diligent any one is to promote the common intereſt of the whole body, the more certain is he of advancing his own. *As every man hath receiv'd the gift, even ſo* St. *Peter* exhorts us to *miniſter the ſame one to another, as good ſtewards of the manifold grace of God.* We are not proprietors of the grace of God, but ſtewards; we receiv'd it not barely for our own uſe, but to diſpenſe it to others: we are to give an account of our receipts, and of our diſburſements; *every one who hath receiv'd the gift, is to miniſter the ſame*: if at the foot of the account it appears that we have receiv'd any thing which we have not miniſtred, we muſt expect the doom of careleſs and unfaithful ſtewards: *if, inſtead of trading with our talents, and putting them to the exchangers, that our Lord at his coming may receive his own with uſury, we hide them in the earth,* and think it ſufficient to return the ſame in ſpecie and in tale, we ſhall be adjudg'd unprofitable ſervants, when we come to give up our accounts.

1 Pet. 4. 10.

Matt. 25. 27.

LET us therefore carefully conſider all thoſe ties, by which we are ſo ſtrongly bound to the mutual offices of promoting each other's ſpiritual good. We are, by the very natural frame of our ſouls, diſpos'd to love each other; and when we promote our mutual good, we do but follow our mutual propenſions. The indigence of our nature provokes us to reciprocal offices of charity; no one is ſelf-ſufficient, ſo as to ſubſiſt without the help of others, and 'tis equitable that the aid we expect, we ſhould in our turns afford. Our plenty is as forcible an argument for our charity, as our want; there is pleaſure in giving more than in receiving; and we deny our ſelves the greateſt ſatisfaction our natures are capable of, if we envy our ſelves that ſolid and rational pleaſure. As we are inclin'd to, ſo we are fitted for, the offices of ſociety; and we defeat, as much as in us lies, the gracious deſigns of providence, if we do not uſe thoſe abilities which he hath given us, to the end for which he intended them, the benefit of mankind. If we look about us, we find that the ſeveral parts of the univerſe contribute each to the good of the other, and all to the good of man; and we are the only irregular, uſeleſs part of the creation, if we are unſerviceable one to another. All theſe reaſons oblige us, as men, to promote each others good; and if, either by the ſtrength of our reaſon, or by the help of revelation, we know that our happineſs is not confin'd to this world, but that we are capable of a more durable and laſting good; the ſame reaſons determine us to endeavour each others ſpiritual welfare, as being the greateſt good we are capable of, and the only good we can be ſatisfied with.

THE angels, who are of a ſuperior order to us, do joyfully miniſter to our ſalvation; and we, who are more nearly tied to each other by the ſame common nature, ought much more to contribute to the ſalvation of each other. God *would have all men to be ſav'd*; and we ought to concur with the gracious deſigns of God, in being labourers together with him in carrying on this great work of men's ſalvation.

1 Tim. 2. 4.

Chriſt died for the ſalvation of all, and St. *Paul* hath made his love the Ephef. 5. 2. pattern and meaſure of ours; *Walk in love, as Chriſt alſo hath lov'd us, and hath given himſelf for us, an offering, and a ſacrifice to God, for a ſweet-ſmelling ſavour.* We are all made of one blood, and as brethren are tied to all the offices of dearneſs, which ariſe from that proximity of relation: Ephef. 4. 4. we are regenerated by *one Spirit*, into *one hope of one* and the ſame *calling*, that we ſhould be ſons of *one God, and Father of us all*, and *members* of one myſtical body, of one and the ſame Lord Jeſus Chriſt; ſo that we are not only brethren, but *being many, are one body* in the Lord, *and members of each other*. As natural therefore as it is for the eye to guide, for the feet to carry, and for the hands to feed the other members; ſo natural is it for Chriſtians to inſtruct, to direct, and to ſupport each other.

Col. 3. 14. CHARITY *is the bond of* all *perfection*; and this promoting the ſalvation of each other is the moſt perfect kind, and nobleſt inſtance, of charity. Charity is the peculiar teſt, by which Chriſtians are diſtinguiſh'd from unbelievers; and this ſpiritual charity places thoſe Saints of God, who are peculiarly exercis'd in it, as much above the common level of other Chriſtians, as Chriſtians themſelves are placed above the irregenerate. This charity may always be afforded, without ever being exhauſted: none are ſo poor, as to be unable to ſhew it; and none can become poor, by being too prodigal of it: the exerciſe of it is cheap, and the reward of it is infinite. *Above all things* therefore *let us have* 1 Pet. 4. 8. this *fervent charity among our ſelves*; *for* this *charity ſhall cover a multitude of ſins.* Let us *always abound in this work of the Lord, foraſmuch as we know that this labour of love will not be in vain in the Lord.*

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SERMON XLVIII.

Brotherly Reproof.

Rom. X. 1.

Brethren, my heart's deſire and prayer to God for Iſrael is, that they might be ſav'd.

The ſecond Sermon on this Text.

IN a former diſcourſe upon theſe words, after I had open'd to you, from the context, the inducements which St. *Paul* had to make this outward declaration of his inward affection to the *Jews*, I obſerv'd to you, that St. *Paul*, in his publick profeſſion of his heart's deſire and private prayers, might be conſider'd by us, either under the character of a Chriſtian, or of an Apoſtle; and the *Jews*, either as unbelievers who oppos'd the Goſpel, or as St. *Paul*'s *brethren and kinſmen according to the fleſh*.

IF we conſider him as a Chriſtian, and them as oppoſers of the Goſpel, we may learn from his example this duty; that we are oblig'd as Chriſtians to deſire and to promote the eternal good of thoſe, who do themſelves neglect their own ſalvation.

IF we conſider him as a Chriſtian, and them as his kinſmen, we may then learn from his example this farther duty; that we are more particularly oblig'd to promote the ſalvation of thoſe, who are more nearly related to us.

IF we conſider him as an Apoſtle and Miniſter of the Goſpel, his example will yet farther inſtruct us, that it is the duty, as of all Chriſtians in general, ſo more particularly of the miniſters of God's Word, to promote the ſalvation of all men.

THE proof and enforcement of theſe ſeveral duties I propos'd to my ſelf, and, in purſuit of that propoſal, have already prov'd to you what obligations we are all under to promote the eternal good of thoſe, who do themſelves neglect their own ſalvation.

I HAVE ſhewn at large that we are, by the very natural frame and make of our ſouls, diſpos'd to love and help each other; and that when we do promote our mutual good, we do but follow the bent of our own na-

natural inclinations: that beſides this, the indigence of our nature doth ſtrongly provoke us to all the reciprocal offices of beneficence and charity: that no one is ſelf-ſufficient, ſo as to ſubſiſt independently without the help of others; and that therefore it is equal, that the aid we expect, we ſhould in our turns afford: that our plenty is as forcible an argument for our charity, as our want; that, as our bleſſed Lord hath obſerv'd, *it is better to give than to receive*, and that therefore we deny our ſelves the greateſt ſatisfaction we are capable of, if, thro' wanting to impart to others out of our abundance, we ſhould abridge our ſelves of this moſt ſolid and rational pleaſure: that as we are ſtrongly inclin'd to, ſo we are peculiarly fitted for, the offices of ſocial charity; and that therefore we defeat, as much as in us lies, the gracious deſigns of providence, if we do not uſe thoſe abilities which God hath given us, for the end for which he intended them, the common benefit of mankind: that if we look about us, we ſhall find that the ſeveral parts of the univerſe do contribute each reſpectively to the good of the other, and all of them joyntly to the good of man; and that therefore we are the only irregular uſeleſs part of the creation, if we are unſerviceable one to another: all theſe reaſons, I told you, oblige us as men, that is, as reaſonable and ſociable creatures, to promote each others good in general; and if either by the ſtrength of our reaſon, or the light of revelation, we can learn that our happineſs is not confin'd to this world, but that we are capable of a more durable and laſting good in the world to come, the ſame reaſons determine us more ſtrongly to endeavour each others ſpiritual welfare, as being the greateſt good we are capable of, and the only good we can be ſatisfied with.

I FARTHER obſerv'd to you, that the angels, who are a ſuperior order to us, do joyfully miniſter to our ſalvation; and that therefore we, who are more nearly tied to each other by the ſame common nature, ought much more to contribute to the ſalvation of one another.

LASTLY, I told you that charity *is the bond of* all *perfection*, and that this promoting the ſalvation of others is the moſt perfect kind and nobleſt inſtance of charity. All theſe reaſons have we, as I ſhew'd you, to promote the ſalvation of each other; by all theſe ties are we bound to this duty; each of them, conſider'd ſeverally, ſtrong enough to make us diligent in the performance of it; all of them taken together, of ſuch force as not, without the greateſt hardneſs of heart, callouſneſs of ſoul, and utter inſenſibility of conſcience, to be reſiſted.

BUT tho' our obligations to this duty have been ſet in their true light; tho', if we attend to the reaſons which have been brought for promoting each others ſalvation, we cannot but be fully convinc'd that it is our bounden duty, and ought to be our conſtant practice; yet what hath been hitherto ſaid may, perhaps, be too general to be of any great uſe. We may be thoroughly perſwaded by the arguments which have been brought, that we are all indiſpenſably bound to further each others ſpiritual good; but we may ſtill be at a loſs how to contribute to ſo neceſſary and excellent a work. Few men are ſo diabolically malicious, as not to wiſh the ſalvation of others: if indeed the ſalvation of one man did any way interfere with that of another, ſome might be tempted to invert St. *Paul's* wiſh, and to deſire others might be *accurs'd from Chriſt*, that they themſelves might be ſav'd. But ſince the eternal happineſs of our brethren can no way diminiſh, but may much augment our own; ſince the eternal miſery of thoſe who periſh is ſo far from adding to the bliſs of thoſe

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who are ſav'd, that it is difficult to account for its not leſſening it; as far as faint deſires and unactive wiſhes go, we are all willing enough that others ſhould be ſav'd. Some by the heat of an ungovernable paſſion, or by the power of an over-grown habit, may be carried ſo far as to wiſh, and that with ſeeming earneſtneſs and vehemence, the damnation of thoſe who have either really, or in their imagination, provok'd them. But it is obſervable, that the ſame men are as liberal in wiſhing deſtruction to their own ſouls; ſo that it is plain they either mean nothing by what they ſay; or that they have no ſettled notions of a future ſtate; or that they think their wiſhes will have no effect in bringing upon themſelves and others the evils wiſh'd for. Theſe are haſty, not deliberate wiſhes; wiſhes of paſſion, not of reaſon; wiſhes in language, not in heart; or if they are real, cool, ſincere deſires, they are the wiſhes not of Chriſtians, but of men poſſeſs'd by the devil, and led away captive by him at his pleaſure.

CERTAIN it is, that all who have any ſenſe of Religion; all who deſire their own ſalvation, how ſlack ſoever they may be in actually promoting, will not fail to wiſh for, the ſalvation of others. For we may wiſh our brethren eternal ſalvation as cheaply as we may the leaſt temporal good; and theſe wiſhes being as cheap, may be as common; but then we cannot but know that they will be as uſeleſs too; as ineffectual to the good of our brethren, as inſufficient to the diſcharge of our duty. What St. *James* ſaith of unactive wiſhes of temporal good things to our brethren, without doing any thing to procure to them what we wiſh, is equally applicable to theſe empty, ſuperficial, uneffectual deſires of their ſpiritual good: *If a brother or ſiſter be naked and deſtitute of daily food, and one of you ſay unto them, Depart in peace, be you warm'd and filled, notwithſtanding ye give them not thoſe things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?* So if a brother or ſiſter be naked of good works, and deſtitute of God's grace; and one of us ſay of them, Would to God they were reclaim'd! may they have a due ſenſe of their danger! may they repent and be ſav'd, notwithſtanding we impart not to them thoſe things which are needful to the ſoul, what doth it profit? Such a charitable wiſh in both caſes, *if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.* This ſpiritual charity therefore, if it be ſincere, will not terminate in empty wiſhes, but will exert it ſelf in real acts of charity. Jam. 2. 15, 16.

IF our deſires of promoting the ſalvation of others are vigorous, they will put us upon finding out ſome methods of attaining what we ſo earneſtly deſire. For nothing is more active, nothing more ingenious, than a warm and eager deſire. Our thoughts will be always upon the full ſtretch to bring about thoſe deſigns our hearts are entirely ſet upon; and whilſt they are ſo, we can ſcarce fail to ſtrike out ſome proper method of compaſſing what we are once fully and ſteadily reſolv'd on. There are ſeveral ways of promoting the ſalvation of other men, which will offer themſelves to thoſe who are enflam'd with a warm deſire of effecting ſo glorious a work, and who are buſy in ſearching out the moſt likely methods of doing it to purpoſe: and amongſt theſe, ſpiritual advice and wholſom reproofs are inſtances of charity, which a wicked and degenerate age will furniſh us with too many and too preſſing occaſions for. A charitable and ſeaſonable reproof of our brethren for their ſins is a duty of ſuch importance to others, and ſuch advantage to our ſelves; ſo neceſſary to be perform'd by all Chriſtians, and yet ſo apt to be neglected

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by moſt; ſo difficult to be manag'd as it ought, and ſo uſeful when it is manag'd in the manner it ſhould be, that it cannot but be very proper to ſhew,

I. THAT this inſtance of ſpiritual charity, this particular way of promoting the ſalvation of thoſe who neglect their own, is the duty of all Chriſtians.

II. THAT this duty, in order to its being acceptable to God and beneficial to our neighbour, muſt be perform'd with caution, and after a particular manner: which manner I ſhall endeavour to repreſent to you, for your better direction in the right performance of a duty ſo important to be practis'd, and ſo difficult to be practis'd as it ought.

Firſt THEN I am to prove, that it is the duty of all Chriſtians to reprove their offending brethren;

THIS is the more neceſſary to be prov'd, becauſe ſome even good men are apt to think it the peculiar office of thoſe, who are ſet apart to miniſter to the ſalvation of mankind; and that it would be an uſurpation of the ſacred rights of God's miniſters for any, who are not call'd to his immediate ſervice, to intrude upon their function, by reproving men for their faults; which is either thought, or pretended to be thought, their peculiar duty, and incommunicable privilege. Now true it is, that the miniſters of God's Word are under more and ſtronger ties to diſcharge this duty, than private Chriſtians; but it doth not hence follow, that private perſons are under no obligations at all to perform it. Some acts indeed are ſo peculiar to the ſtewards of God's myſteries, that it is not lawful for others, who are not appointed to this work to invade what God hath made their ſingular prerogative; but the duty of reproving ſinners is not ſo reſtrained to them, that the conſciencious practice of it by others, according to that meaſure of grace, which God has given them, ſhould be deem'd an uſurpation. When thoſe whoſe health is dear to us, labour under a diſtemper which may prove fatal, tho' we pay a great deference to the skill and abilities of an experienc'd and profeſs'd phyſician, yet we are not afraid to interpoſe our own judgment and aſſiſtance towards adminiſtring to their eaſe and recovery: what knowledge we have arriv'd to in theſe matters, either by inſtruction or by experience, we think our ſelves bound in charity to impart, tho' we do not pretend to be of the faculty.

IT hath before been prov'd, that we are all indiſpenſably oblig'd to promote the ſalvation of others; and if reproof may be an effectual method, thro' God's grace, to promote it, it neceſſarily follows that this alſo is a duty common to all believers. Now wholſom reproofs muſt be allow'd to have a direct tendency to this end, and a proper efficiency to procure this benefit to our brethren. When ſinners are commended for what they do, this applauſe of others ſtrengthens and confirms them in their ſins: what their own evil inclinations tempt them to think allowable, that the concurrent judgment of others eaſily perſwades them is free from all blame. But wicked men, who are by the power of their luſts, or by long and inveterate habits wedded to their ſins, do not want the poſitive applauſe and profeſs'd approbation of others, to make them entertain a favourable opinion of thoſe faults, which they have been long acquainted with, and have contracted a great friendſhip for: the ſilence

lence of others ſhall be interpreted a tacit commendation; and what they do not hear expreſsly condemn'd, they will eaſily believe is inwardly approv'd. But when a faithful friend opens their eyes, and ſhews them what is criminal in their conduct, this awakens them out of their ſecurity; what they find actually diſlik'd by thoſe, whoſe opinions they before preſum'd agreeable with theirs, they now begin to ſuſpect may be truly worthy of blame: this thought carries them on farther to an examination of their ſtate, and an impartial view of their caſe: ſuch a view gives them an inſight into themſelves, and an apprehenſion of their danger: this apprehenſion puts them upon the proper methods of eſcaping thoſe dangers they are apprehenſive of: their reaſon and their faith will inſtruct them, that the dangers they have juſt cauſe to dread, are no other ways to be eſcap'd, but by a ſpeedy reformation: thus doth the charitable reproof of a pious friend give riſe to ſuch a chain of thoughts, as at laſt end in firm purpoſes of amendment; which, being deliberately made, may, thro' the concurrence of God's holy Spirit, be ſincerely and inviolably kept.

CERTAIN it is that all methods men can take for the reſcuing their offending brethren muſt, without the aſſiſtance of God's grace, be utterly ineffectual; and it is readily acknowledg'd that this grace of God is not in our, but in his diſpoſal. *The wind bloweth where it liſteth,* John. 3. 8. and we cannot determine it to ſuch or ſuch a point; and *ſo* our Saviour hath told us *is every one that is born of the Spirit*: thoſe ſecret influences, which are the beginnings and ſource of all that is good in us, are immediately convey'd to our ſouls by God's Spirit, and are not under the direction of men. But it is alſo true that God, as in natural productions, ſo alſo in the more wonderful work of regeneration, acts by the mediation of ſecond cauſes: tho' we cannot, by any proper efficiency of our own, change men's inclinations; yet we may be inſtruments in God's hands towards the production of ſuch a change: the actual prevalency of good thoughts to work in ſinners a thorough reformation, is purely owing to the powerful operation of God's Spirit; but the firſt riſe and ſpring may be from the ſuggeſtion of a faithful friend.

IT is freely acknowledg'd that preaching, advice, reproof, and all other methods of inſtructing the ignorant, or reforming the wicked, are perfectly uſeleſs, unleſs God by his bleſſed Spirit be pleas'd to enlighten their underſtandings, and to diſpoſe their wiſhes to what is good: a word which only touches the ear, a ſound that only ſtrikes the air, cannot work an effect to which it bears no manner of proportion. It is too plain from experience, that both miniſters from the pulpit, and private friends in converſation, may ſay things in that manner, and with that force, which is very proper to perſwade and to reform, without working any conviction or reformation upon their hearers. For men can only ſpeak to the ears of thoſe to whom they addreſs themſelves; but it is God alone who can ſpeak to their ſouls, to their underſtandings, and to their hearts. Sinners, before they can be thoroughly perſwaded to reclaim their lives, muſt enter into themſelves; muſt be attentive to the ſecret whiſpers of God's Spirit; muſt hearken to interior truth; muſt expect and receive anſwers from that common maſter, who inſtructs both them that teach, and them that are taught; both thoſe who reprove, and thoſe who are reprov'd. But none, who are not groſs enthuſiaſts, will be ſo abſurd as to argue hence, that all preaching, all inſtruction, all reproof is in vain. With as good reaſon might it be pleaded, that *Paul* need not *plant*, *Apollos* need not *water*, the husband-man need not ſow, becauſe it is *God alone that giveth the increaſe*. Eccleſ. 11. 6. The wiſe man's inference, I am ſure, is quite contrary: *In the morning*, ſaith he, *ſow thy ſeed, and in the evening with-hold not thine hand: for thou knoweſt not whether ſhall proſper, either this, or that; or whether they both ſhall be alike good.* According therefore to *Solomon*'s way of reaſoning, we muſt not argue that becauſe reproof is ſometimes ineffectual, thro' the want of God's grace to cooperate with it, it may by us be at any time omitted; but that becauſe, thro' the influence of God's grace it ſometimes is effectual, and always may be, and we know not when it will, when it will not be ſo, therefore it is always to be tried.

WE are expreſsly taught in Scripture, that *unto God the Lord belong the iſſues of life and death*; that *he kills, and he makes alive*, that Wiſd. 16. 12. *he wounds, and he heals*; that *it is neither herb nor mollifying plaiſter, which reſtoreth men to health, but the word of the Lord which healeth all things*: yet no one is ſo ridiculouſly abſurd as to argue hence, that medicines or phyſicians are of no value or uſe; it is reaſon enough for our uſing them, that there is a time when in the uſe of them there is good ſucceſs. If therefore we have the ſame regard for the ſouls of our brethren, as we have for their bodies; if their ſalvation be as dear to us as their health; we ſhall be equally careful to adminiſter ſuch medicines as are proper for their recovery out of ſin, tho' we cannot certainly promiſe our ſelves that they will be effectual. We muſt do our duty, and leave the event to God; we muſt uſe thoſe means for their recovery which he hath preſcrib'd, and not neglect what is in our power to do; becauſe all we can do is, without the grace of God, inſufficient.

THERE are ſome offices of humanity, which thoſe, who had no other light than that of natural reaſon to guide their actions by, thought themſelves oblig'd to perform, not only to their familiars, but to ſtrangers; not only to their friends, but to their enemies. To ſhew the way to travellers who have loſt it; to warn perſons in danger of a rock or of a precipice; to permit others to light their lamp by ours, are particularly inſtanc'd in, as benefits, which being uſeful to thoſe who receive them, and no ways prejudicial to thoſe who give them, are to be denied to none. Now can we think our ſelves bound by the laws of humanity to theſe common inſtances of kindneſs, and can we pretend to be exempt from others of much more importance to thoſe who want them, and of no more detriment to us who afford them? Doth common humanity oblige us to put miſguided travellers into the right way, and will not Chriſtianity prevail upon us to call back thoſe wandring ſouls, which have err'd and ſtray'd from *the narrow path which leads unto life* into the more *wide* and beaten way *which leads to deſtruction*? Are we ſo careful to reſcue an unwary voyager from the danger of ſtriking on a rock, and have we no compaſſion on thoſe who, without our interpoſal, are in immediate hazard of *making ſhipwrack of a good conſcience*? Do we cry out when a ſtranger is running upon a precipice, and are we ſilent when our brother is falling into the bottomleſs pit? Should we think it an inſtance of ſavageneſs and barbarity to deny another to borrow light from our light, and is there no cruelty in with-holding from them, *who ſit in darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death*, that light which would not ſhine with leſs luſtre to us, *by guiding their feet alſo into the way of peace*?

THE law of *Moſes* ſaith, *Thou ſhalt not ſee thy brother's ox or his* Deut. 22. 1. *ſheep go aſtray, and hide thy ſelf from them; thou ſhalt in any caſe bring them again unto thy brother. Thou ſhalt not ſee thy brother's aſs or his* v. 4. *ox fall down by the way, and hide thy ſelf from them; thou ſhalt ſurely help him to lift them up again.* And may we not apply to this caſe what St. *Paul* ſaith in another? *Doth God take care for oxen? Or ſaith* 1 Cor. 9. 9, 10. *he it altogether for our ſakes? For our ſakes no doubt this is written*, that thoſe who are by the laws of charity oblig'd to bring back a brother's ſtray'd ſheep, and to lift up his faln ox, ſhould think themſelves much more ſtrictly bound by the ſame law to bring back their brother himſelf when gone aſtray, and to lift him up when faln into the pit of deſtruction. But we are not to draw this inference from parity of caſes; this duty is deliver'd both in the law and in the Goſpel, not in figure and allegory, not in ſimilitude and parables, but in expreſs words and direct terms, which, according to the rigour of the letter, exact from us this ſpecial act of charity to the ſoul of our brother. It is plainly written, *Thou ſhalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou ſhalt in any wiſe* Levit. 19. 17. *rebuke thy neighbour, and not ſuffer ſin upon him.* So that, in the eye of the *Moſaick* law, not to rebuke our brother is to hate him in our heart; and I need not tell you how heinous a ſin the hatred of our brother is in the eye of the Goſpel: it is by St. *John* made utterly inconſiſtent with a Goſpel-ſtate; and to be a Chriſtian, and yet to hate our brethren, is, according to his doctrine, a palpable contradiction. *He that ſaith he is* 1 John 2. 9, 10, 11. *in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkneſs even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occaſion of ſtumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkneſs, and walketh in darkneſs, and knoweth not whither he goeth, becauſe that darkneſs hath blinded his eyes.* If therefore the not rebuking our brother is hatred of him, as *Moſes* affirms; if the hatred of our brother is a ſign of infidelity, as St. *John* aſſerts; this duty of reproving our brethren ſtands upon as firm a ground, as any other in the Law or Goſpel; and cannot be omitted without our incurring the threats of the one, and our forfeiting the promiſes of the other. *The law*, which *was given by Moſes*, made this a duty to thoſe who liv'd under that diſpenſation; *and the grace and truth*, which *came by Jeſus Chriſt*, hath enforc'd it upon all Chriſtians.

OUR Saviour hath given this rule to all his diſciples, *If thy brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his fault.* The words directly take in only ſuch treſpaſſes, as are committed by our brother againſt us; but ſince treſpaſſes againſt God, or his own ſoul, are equally pernicious to our brother's ſalvation, the ſame charity which obliges us to reprove him for injuries done to us, doth equally engage us to admoniſh him of his other ſins. Should we then only complain when we ſuffer by his ſins, this might look like kindneſs to our ſelves rather than to him: but when we reprove him for thoſe treſpaſſes which are no ways prejudicial to us, ſuch reproof is a more certain mark of a ſincere diſintereſſed concern for his good. We are here commanded by our Saviour *firſt to tell our brother of his faults, before we tell the Church*: Matt. 18. theſe words therefore are not directed immediately to the Church, or to the guides of it, but to private Chriſtians; ſince no recourſe is to be had to Church cenſures, till the admonitions of private men are found to be ineffectual. An authoritative rebuke for the terror of evil works, and the good example of others, is the office of Church paſtors; but a charitable reproof for the putting a ſtop to our brother's wickedneſs, and the benefit of his ſoul, is a duty common to all Chriſt's diſciples. St. *Paul* doth not addreſs himſelf either to the magiſtrate, or to the governours Gal. 6. 1. of the Church, when he exhorts the *Galatians*, that *if a man were overtaken in a fault, thoſe which were ſpiritual ſhould reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs, conſidering themſelves, leſt they alſo ſhould be tempted.* All who are ſpiritual, and all who are capable of being themſelves tempted, are bound to reſtore ſuch as are overtaken in a fault; ſo that we muſt either, on the one ſide, quit all our pretenſions to the ſpirit of the Goſpel, or, on the other ſide, pretend to be without the reach of temptation; we muſt either profeſs our ſelves wholly carnal, or ſo purely ſpiritual as to be ſinleſs, if we plead an exemption from this duty of reproving our brethren.

THIS kind of charity, as well as all others, is to be proportion'd to men's abilities: thoſe who are beſt fitted for the difficult task of reproof, are under the greateſt obligations to perform it. Authority, experience, readineſs of thought and language, a commanding air, a dexterity in addreſſing to the paſſions, knowledge of men and things, and any other qualities which fit a man for the art of perſwading, are ſo many ſeveral talents which God hath given us for the advantage of our brother; and which are to be employ'd by us in the furtherance of his ſalvation, as by other methods, ſo by wholſom and ſeaſonable reproofs. We are to be merciful in this, as well as in other inſtances, after our power: if we have much power and influence over our brother, we are to abound the more in this *labour of love*; if our abilities are leſs, we muſt do our diligence gladly to employ that little power we have to the amendment 2 Cor. 8. 12. of our brother. *For if there be firſt a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

NOR do our obligations to this duty riſe only in proportion to our abilities of performing it, but alſo in relation to the hopes we have of ſucceeding in it. Where it is impoſſible to work upon our brethren by wholſom reproofs, and we are certain of that impoſſibility, there the omiſſion of an endeavour which we know would be in vain, is free from all ſin. Where the hopes of ſucceſs are faint, there the failure to attempt what we have but ſmall hopes of compaſſing, is in ſome meaſure excuſable, tho' not wholly innocent. Where we may confidently promiſe our ſelves ſucceſs, there the neglect of a duty which will ſo probably turn to account, will admit of no apology. Reproof being a poſitive, not a negative duty, agrees with all other affirmative duties in this, that it doth not oblige us at all times, in all circumſtances, and in all places; a diſpoſition of mind to exerciſe this charity, when there is a proper occaſion for it, is our conſtant duty; but the actual exerciſe of it is then only our duty, when we meet with fit objects; and when the time, place, and other circumſtances are ſuch, as are moſt likely to render our reproof effectual. But tho' all perſons are not equally oblig'd to this duty; tho' the ſame perſons are not equally oblig'd to it at all times; tho' our obligations to it may be greater or leſs according to the variety of circumſtances; yet ſince we are all oblig'd to promote each others ſalvation; ſince reproof hath ſo proper a tendency to promote the ſalvation of our brethren; ſince tho', without the concurrence of God's grace, it can have no good effect, yet thro' the cooperation of his Spirit it may be effectual; ſince, whenever it may be uſeful, charity diſpoſes us to exerciſe it, and we can ſcarce ever know but it may be uſeful;

ful; ſince common humanity requires that we ſhould do all thoſe good turns, which may be to the great benefit of others, without any conſiderable detriment to our ſelves, and in many caſes we may by reproof benefit our brethren, without running any the leaſt hazard, and may at all times with very little hurt to our ſelves do them the greateſt good; ſince the law of God requires of us that we ſhould be careful to recover our neighbour's ſtray'd or faln ox, and by conſequence much more requires of us, that we ſhould recover our ſtray'd or faln brother; ſince not reproving our brother is in the law of *Moſes* interpreted hatred of him, and hatred of our brother is in the Goſpel of Chriſt affirm'd to be an utter denial of our faith; ſince God hath given us ſeveral abilities which peculiarly fit us for the performance of this charitable office, and all theſe abilities are ſo many talents, for which we are anſwerable at the great day of account; ſince a conſciencious diſcharge of this duty, would have a very great influence in the reforming a licentious and degenerate age; ſince, by the practice of it, a conſiderable ſtop might be put to that inundation of vice which ſeems ready to over-run us; of the neceſſity of this duty, and the ſtrong ties we are all under to be diligent and active in it, nothing farther needs to be added; only how it is to be perform'd by us, and what manner of performance is moſt likely to be effectual to our brother's good, and therefore moſt fit to be aim'd at by us, remains to be enquir'd at our next opportunity.

SER-

SERMON XLIX.

Brotherly Reproof.

ROM. X. 1.

The third Sermon on this Text.

Brethren, my heart's deſire and prayer to God for Iſrael is, that they might be ſav'd.

THAT we are all of us oblig'd, after the example of St. *Paul*, to deſire the ſalvation of thoſe who neglect their own; that this ought not to be a faint, ſuperficial, unactive wiſh, but an hearty, vigorous, and warm deſire; that what we thus ſincerely, eagerly, and vehemently deſire, we ought by all the moſt probable means to promote; that reproof of our offending brethren is, amongſt others, one likely method to promote their ſalvation; that it hath in it ſelf a proper tendency to this end, by warning our brethren of their danger, by informing them of their error, by diſcountenancing them in their wicked practices, and by taking away that encouragement they had to ſin, from the ſuppos'd approbation or connivence of others; that reproof, tho' it ſhould in it ſelf have no natural efficiency to reform our ſinful brethren, may yet be one of thoſe means which the Spirit of God makes uſe of to procure this effect; that, thro' the concurrence of God's grace, it may have a ſupernatural force, in working together with his holy Spirit towards the ſalvation of our brethren; that whenever, thro' the effectual cooperation of God's grace, it may be uſeful to others, we ought to uſe it; and that we can ſcarce ever know but it may be uſeful, and therefore can ſeldom be excus'd from the uſe of it; that all thoſe good turns, which may be to the benefit of others, without detriment to our ſelves, and even all thoſe which may be to the very great advantage of others, without any conſiderable hurt to our ſelves, ought to be done to others by the laws of humanity; and that reproof may be of infinite advantage to our brethren, and either of none or no great detriment to our ſelves, and therefore comes within the compaſs of thoſe good turns, which all civiliz'd nations have thought a common debt due to all men; that we are by the law of charity

rity requir'd to bring back our neighbour's ſtray'd ox, and to lift up his faln beaſt, and by conſequence are much more requir'd, by the ſame law, to recover a ſtray'd or faln brother; that not to rebuke our brother, is in the law of *Moſes* conſtrued to be hatred of him, and that hatred of our brother is in the Goſpel of Chriſt levell'd with murder, and interpreted to be an utter renunciation of our Chriſtianity; that this duty of reproving is not reſtrain'd either to civil magiſtrates, or to Church paſtors, but obliges all Chriſtians in common; that God hath given us ſeveral abilities, which peculiarly fit us for this charitable office of reproving our brethren; and that all theſe abilities are ſo many talents for which we are anſwerable at the great day of account; that a conſciencious diſcharge of this duty would be of great influence in the reforming a licentious and degenerate age, and might probably put ſome ſtop to that inundation of vice which is broke in upon us, and which threatens to overwhelm us; that upon theſe conſiderations the reproof of our brethren is a neceſſary, weighty, and important duty; and that therefore we ought to be diligent, active, and unwearied in the practice of it, hath already been made out, if not with all that ſtrength and force the ſubject is capable of, yet I hope with ſo much clearneſs and evidence, as to leave in you no doubt of your being ſtrictly oblig'd to this Chriſtian duty, no excuſes for the omiſſion of it, no backwardneſs of reſolution conſciencioully to diſcharge it.

Now, that it may be diſcharg'd to the benefit of our brethren, to the honour of God, and to the advantage of our own ſouls; that it may be effectual to thoſe good ends for which it is deſign'd, and may entitle us to a reward for it in the day of retribution; that what proceeds from ſound and honeſt principles, may not miſcarry for want of being manag'd with due caution and prudence; I am now to ſhew what that manner of reproof is, which is moſt likely to turn to account; what thoſe qualifications are, which are requir'd in reproof, to make it effectual to our neighbour's good. Now the cautions neceſſary to be obſerv'd in reproving others are theſe:

I. That we ſhould do it with prudence.
II. That we ſhould do it with meekneſs.
III. That we ſhould do it with humility.
IV. That we ſhould take care to be free from thoſe faults for which we reprove others.

And *Firſt*, we muſt reprove our offending brethren with prudence.

This, as it is requiſite in the whole conduct of our lives, and eſſential to all moral virtues, as being that ſkill by which we ſo order our actions in all circumſtances of them, as to render them ſuitable and agreeable to their rule; ſo is it in a more peculiar manner requiſite in reproof, as being an action which requires much dexterity and ſkill to perform it aright, much ſagacity to diſcern upon what occaſions, to what perſons, at what times, and in what manner it is to be perform'd. There are other duties which require more firmneſs of mind, more ſtrength of reſolution, more invincible courage, to carry us thro' them, in ſpight of all temptations, than this doth; but few or none require ſo much circumſpection and addreſs, ſo much art and caution, ſo much wiſdom and experience, as this duty of reproof. There is a fitneſs and decency in a prudent reproof, which it is much eaſier for one to conceive and apprehend where one finds it, than by any deſcription or character to give another a juſt notion of. This comelineſs *Solomon* had in his view, when he pick'd out ſome of thoſe pleaſing objects that moſt ſtrike upon the ſenſes, to give us a reſemblance of that agreeable beauty there is in a diſcreet reproof. *A word fitly ſpoken,* ſaith he, *is like apples of gold in pictures of ſilver. As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold; ſo is a wiſe reprover upon an obedient ear.* Prov. 25. 11, 12. What gracefulneſs there is in colours judiciouſly choſen, and rightly put together; what agreeableneſs there is in the moſt valuable metals ſo appoſitely plac'd one by another, as to add to each others luſtre; what beauty ariſes from the richeſt and choiceſt ornaments; ſuch is the gracefulneſs, ſuch the excellency, ſuch the beauty of a wiſe reproof, fitted to the occaſion of it, and to the perſon and character of thoſe who reprove, and thoſe who are reprov'd. And as thoſe things are generally moſt uſeful in their kind, which are moſt beautiful; ſo it is in the caſe of reproof, which is not only more agreeable and acceptable when applied with prudence and diſcretion, but alſo more ſerviceable to our neighbour's good, more conducing to that end we ought to propoſe to our ſelves whenever we reprove, the reformation of our brethren.

Now, tho' tis very hard to point out thoſe rules of prudence, which vary according to the variety of circumſtances, which a wiſe and diſcreet man will eaſily diſcover, without being taught; and an imprudent and indiſcreet perſon will miſtake or miſapply, tho' taught; yet, for our better direction in the diſcharge of ſo important and difficult a duty, I will venture to give a rude and imperfect draught of thoſe marks, which diſtinguiſh a prudent and well-choſen reprehenſion from a raſh and indiſcreet reproof. To make it ſuch as prudence requires, it muſt be given

1. On proper occaſions.
2. To proper perſons.
3. At proper times.
4. In a proper manner.

And 1*ſt*, we muſt reprove on proper and juſt occaſions.

Tho' reproof be a neceſſary duty, yet it is not a duty which we muſt be haſty to perform, whether there be any occaſion for it or not: as we may be, and often are, too backward, ſo alſo is it poſſible, that we may ſometimes be too forward, in reproving our brethren. The ſame charity which will diſpoſe us to the friendly office of reproof where it is wanted, will incline us to wiſh it may be ſeldom wanted; and in this, as well as in other inſtances of charity, tho' we ſhould be glad to aſſiſt and relieve thoſe who ſtand in need of our help, yet we ought to be more pleas'd that the circumſtances of our brethren are ſuch, as not to want the aſſiſtance of our charity. It is a kind and charitable office to give alms to the poor; but the offering of them to thoſe who are rich is deſervedly look'd upon as an injury and affront. And it is the ſame thing in the caſe before us; where a real fault calls for reproof, there it cannot be with-held without breach of charity: but then, on the other ſide, it is as great a breach both of charity and of juſtice to reprove thoſe, who have done nothing worthy of reproof. *Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs againſt thy neighbour*, ſaith the law: and tho' this precept primarily regards publick accuſations in courts of judicature, or unjuſt detractions from our neighbour's fame, by calumniating him to others; yet it reaches in ſome meaſure alſo thoſe accuſations of our neighbour, which

which we bring againſt him to himſelf: here alſo we ought to proceed according to what can be alleg'd and prov'd, and not by raſh ſuſpicions and ſurmiſes: for tho' there is no danger, that he, himſelf being judge, ſhould pronounce ſentence againſt himſelf, where he knows that he is falſly accus'd; yet the very being accus'd without juſt grounds is rightly interpreted an injury: tho' his conſcience acquits him from the guilt with which he is charg'd, yet his mind will be diſturb'd with the thoughts of having been condemn'd in the opinion of his accuſer; and tho', upon his denial of the charge, he may ſay what is ſufficient to clear him to the perſon who unjuſtly reprov'd him, yet he cannot be ſure that he who accus'd him wrongfully, and without ground, will do him the juſtice to acquit him upon his aſſerting his innocence; nor may he perhaps think it a ſufficient reparation for a wrong once done him, that the ſame wrong is no longer done him.

BUT there is ſtill a worſe conſequence from our reproving others without juſt grounds, which is this, that if we are too haſty in reproving where there is no occaſion, in other caſes, where there are juſt occaſions for our doing it, our reproofs will be of no weight. He who hath once forfeited his credit by a falſe accuſation, will not be believ'd where he brings a true one; and when we come to rebuke our brother for ſins he is really guilty of, our mouths will be preſently ſtopp'd with this anſwer, where it can be truly made, that we have been in an error before, and may be miſtaken now; that our former cenſures have been unjuſt, and that therefore our preſent reproofs are not to be regarded. To prevent theſe ill conſequences of a groundleſs and over-haſty reproof, we ought not to proceed upon light ſuſpicions, and mere conjectures in rebuking our brethren: we muſt be ſure that they have done thoſe facts of which we accuſe them, and that thoſe facts have in them that ſinfulneſs, which requires at our hands the chaſtiſement of reproof. Our charge againſt them, as having done ſuch facts, muſt be ſupported by the teſtimony of their own conſciences, which muſt agree with us to accuſe them; and our reproof of ſuch facts, as wicked and ſinful, muſt be grounded on the authority of God's law, which muſt concur with us in the condemnation of them. If the facts are in themſelves dubious, ſuch as may be good or evil, ſinful or innocent, commendable or blameable, according to the different principles from which they proceed, and the different ends to which they are directed, we muſt not uncharitably ſuppoſe that they roſe from a bad principle, when it is poſſible they might ſpring from a good one; or that they were done with a wicked intention, when perhaps they were well intended; but muſt be inclin'd to think and hope the beſt, as knowing it is as proper to *charity* that it ſhould *ſuffer long*, that it ſhould be *kind*, that it ſhould *think no evil*, that it ſhould *believe all things*, and that it ſhould *hope all things*, as that it ſhould reprove thoſe who are juſtly reprovable.

AND as we ought to be ſure of the truth, ſo ought we alſo to be acquainted with the meaſures, of our brother's guilt, when we undertake to reprove him. For a ſentence is not only unjuſt, when it is pronounc'd againſt a perſon wholly innocent, but alſo when it is more ſevere, than the fault, on which it is paſſed, doth juſtly deſerve. Our reproofs therefore, to be juſt, muſt be proportion'd to the faults for which we reprove our brethren; as they are greater or leſs, ſo our reproofs muſt be ſharper or gentler, and riſe or fall according to thoſe preciſe degrees of ſinfulneſs, which we diſcover in the actions we reprove. For if we bring an heavy charge againſt our brother, which we are not able to maintain; if our accuſation runs ſo high, that the evidence falls ſhort of it, he will be apt to plead not guilty to an indictment falſly laid; and whilſt we wrongfully lay to his charge more than he is conſcious of, we ſhall not be able to convince him of ſo much guilt, as he is truly chargeable with.

It looks more like *Phariſaick* pride than Chriſtian charity to lay as great a ſtreſs upon a breach of a punctilio in the law, as upon the wilful tranſgreſſion of the greateſt of God's commandments. None were ſo ſharp-ſighted in diſcovering, none ſo vehement in reproving offenders, as the *Phariſees* were; but then the occaſions of their reproofs were ill choſen; the faults for which they reprov'd others, were ſuch as would not bear the weight of their reproofs; and their rebukes being ſo over-proportion'd to the failures which they ſo ſharply reprov'd, loſt all their authority. Thus we read in the Goſpel, that when *Jeſus went on the* Matt. 12. 1,2. *ſabbath-day thro' the corn, and his diſciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat, the Phariſees ſeeing it ſaid unto him, Behold, thy diſciples do that which is not lawful to do on the ſabbath-day*. And ſo again upon another occaſion *they came unto him ſaying, Why do thy diſciples tranſgreſs the tradition of the elders? For* c. 15. 2. *they waſh not their hands when they eat bread.* Plucking ears of corn might, according to the letter of the law, without an equitable conſtruction of it, be inconſiſtent with the utmoſt rigour of a *Jewiſh* ſabbath; but even reaping and gathering in the corn on the ſabbath, could not have been a greater breach of that holy day in the eſteem of theſe preciſe reformers. What the tradition of the elders deliver'd, that, where conſonant to the law of God, was to be obſerv'd; but to neglect the doctrines of men was, in the opinion of theſe cenſurers as great a ſin as to tranſgreſs the commandments of God; and unwaſh'd hands were thought as juſt matter of a ſevere reproof, as impure hearts, and defil'd conſciences.

That therefore our reproofs may have nothing of a *Phariſaick* air, we muſt take care to diſtinguiſh betwixt faults of infirmity, and preſumptuous ſins; betwixt ſlips thro' inadvertency, and wilful deliberate tranſgreſſions; betwixt miſtakes in breeding or good manners, and offending in the great points of morality; betwixt acting againſt human laws, and breaking the commandments of God; betwixt failing in a circumſtance or ceremony, and being faulty in the weightier matters of God's law; betwixt tranſient acts, and inveterate habits of ſin; betwixt ſuch ſins as our brethren may have fallen into thro' the violence of temptations, and ſuch as they have ſo far acted the devil's part in, that they have with much pains and induſtry ſollicited themſelves and others to the commiſſion of. Thus careful ought we to be in meaſuring the preciſe degrees of our brethrens guilt, not by humour or prejudice, not by fancy or miſtaken principles, but by the unerring rule of God's word. What facts we either from our own obſervation, or the credible report of others, know they have done, ſuch facts, if they are not capable of a good and favourable conſtruction, if they be manifeſtly diſagreeable to the law of God, ſo far forth as they are ſinful, and in thoſe meaſures and degrees of ſin they are chargeable with, are juſt occaſions of our reproof, and ſuch as prudence doth direct us to lay hold of. And as we ought to be diſcreet and wary in chooſing out proper occaſions of reproof, ſo is it a

2*d* POINT of prudence to pitch upon proper perſons to reprove.

IN diſtributing our alms we are wont to enquire, not only where our charity is moſt wanted, but alſo where it may do moſt good. For tho' a perſon may be in great ſtraits, tho' his neceſſities may be very craving; yet if we foreſee that our charity will be thrown away upon him, and eſpecially if we think he will be the worſe, not the better for it, we judge it prudent to with-hold it. In applying medicines we are careful, not only to conſider the nature of the diſeaſe, but alſo the conſtitution of the patient; and tho' the remedies preſcrib'd in books may be proper for the healing of that diſtemper, which the perſon under our cure is affected with, yet, thro' ſome evil diſpoſitions in the party diſeas'd, they may in his particular caſe be ſo far from contributing to his recovery, that they may prove fatal to him. Hence is it that the ſame Word of God, which ſo often and ſo earneſtly inculcates this duty of reproving our brethren, is careful to ſet a mark upon ſome ſorts of men, as improper objects of reproof: *He that reproveth a ſcorner*, ſaith *Solomon*, *getteth to himſelf ſhame*; *and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himſelf a blot.* Prov. 9. 7. By the ſcorner is here meant a prophane perſon, who makes a mock at ſin; and by a wicked man, not every one who is guilty of ſin, for none but wicked men, that is, none but ſinners are to be reprov'd, but one who is deſperately wicked, one who is obſtinately bent upon wickedneſs, and is reſolv'd to ſin on without controll. Tho' we ſhould bring on our ſelves ſhame by ſuch reproofs, yet if they would reclaim the ſcorner, we ought to advance his ſpiritual good at the hazard of our own ill-treatment: but the reaſon why we are not to reprove ſuch is, becauſe we ſhall get nothing but ſhame to our ſelves by it; we ſhall hurt our ſelves, and we ſhall not profit him.

BUT farther, if our reproofs were only uſeleſs to our brother, and not alſo prejudicial to him, there would be then no great miſchief in reproving, tho' it turn'd to no good account. The worſt conſequence of ſuch reproofs is, that they are to the ſpiritual detriment of thoſe who are reprov'd. The aſperſions ſuch ſcorners caſt upon their charitable reprovers, tho' they are very unſuitable returns for their kindneſs, are yet ſuch evils, as they can bear with patience; but the miſchief which ſuch ſcorners do to their own ſouls, by hating reproof, by *ſtopping their ears to the voice of the charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely*; by returning evil for good, hatred for love, curſes for admonitions, is ſuch as we ought to be careful how we any ways contribute to. *Reprove not a ſcorner, leſt he hate thee*; *rebuke a wiſe man, and he will love thee. Give inſtruction to a wiſe man, and he will be yet wiſer*; *teach a juſt man, and he will increaſe in learning.* Prov. 9. 8, 9. The hatred of a ſcorner is a miſchief of it ſelf to be avoided; the love of a wiſe man is a good for its own ſake to be courted: but the miſchief of the former is much greater, as it is an indication of his being irreclaimable by reproof; and the benefit of the latter is much more valuable, as it is a ſign of his being better'd by admonition. Our Saviour hath join'd both theſe ill effects together, the miſchiefs done to the reprov'd, and the miſchiefs brought upon the reprover, by miſapplied reproofs: *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs*, ſaith he, *neither caſt ye your pearls before ſwine, leſt they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.* Matt. 7. 6. We ſhall add to the guilt of thoſe we thus reprove, whilſt our admonitions, which ſhould be *a ſavour of life unto life*, are unto them *a ſavour of death unto* *to death*; and we ſhall our ſelves be guilty of irreverence in proſtituting the holy things of God unto the unholy and prophane.

SOME aſſert, that God in Scripture reproves the wicked, not in order to correct them by ſuch reproofs, ſince he knows they are without his over-ruling grace incorrigible, which grace he is reſolv'd not to confer on them, but that theſe reproofs may render them more inexcuſable: theſe reproofs are not, ſay they, by way of admonition to call them into the right way, but by way of upbraiding to convince them that they are in the wrong. Sinners are, ſay theſe men, outwardly call'd to leave their ſins, and to turn unto God; but ſince this outward call is inſufficient, without the inward call of the Spirit, to reduce them; and this inward call, which alone can effectually reform them, is not allow'd them, the outward is deſign'd to have no other effect than to increaſe their guilt. Theſe doctrines ſeem very harſh, and are not eaſily reconcil'd with the notions that both reaſon and revelation give us of the wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs of God: but whether God reproves the wicked without intention to reclaim them, or not, ſure I am, that the reformation of our brethren ought to be the ſole aim and deſign of our reproving them; and that if we could certainly know that our rebukes, which are intended for their amendment, would increaſe their guilt, and make their damnation ſurer or heavier, it would be ſo far from being our indiſpenſable duty, that it would be an unpardonable ſin in us, to reprove them; and that where we have probable and juſt grounds to ſuſpect that this will be the effect of our reproofs, there, in charity to our brethren, and in love to our own ſouls, we ought to be ſilent.

SINCE therefore reproofs are an act of charity; ſince nothing is more uncharitable than to reprove thoſe who are like to become worſe by reproof; ſince tho' where they may prove ineffectual, they may however be tried, becauſe we do not certainly know that they will be uſeleſs, and we only loſe our labour, if they prove ſo; yet, on the other ſide, where they are likely to be hurtful, there not only our own labour is loſt, but our neighbour's ſoul is indanger'd; ſince the ſame Scriptures, which do frequently inculcate the duty of reproof, do as frequently warn us againſt reproving ſome ſorts of ſinners; it is a neceſſary point of prudence, as to chooſe proper occaſions of reproof, ſo alſo to be cautious whom we reprove. But neither is it ſufficient, that the actions, for which we reprove others, are juſtly reproveable, and the perſons whom we reprove, likely to be amended, or at leaſt not likely to be made worſe by reproof; but to juſtifie the prudence of them, they muſt alſo, in the

3*d* PLACE, be ſeaſonable.

Eccleſ. 3. 1. THE wiſe man hath taught us, that *to every thing there is a ſeaſon, and a time to every purpoſe under the heaven*; and amongſt other things, which are proper or improper according to their being well or ill-tim'd, v. 7. he particularly obſerves, that *there is a time to ſpeak, and a time to be ſilent*. And as ſpeaking and ſilence in general have their ſeveral times or ſeaſons; ſo is this more eſpecially true concerning that ſpecial ſort of ſpeaking, which is deſign'd for our brother's correction and amendment. There is a time when ſuch ſpeaking is moſt likely to be effectual, and therefore is moſt ſeaſonable; and there is a time alſo when reproof may probably turn either to none, or to a bad account, and therefore may ſeaſonably be omitted. When we have any temporal intereſt to promote, we are diligent to find out the moſt favourable opportunities to do it with ſucceſs; we are upon the watch conſtantly to obſerve when theſe offer themſelves, and we are careful to ſeize upon them when offer'd, and will not ſuffer them to ſlip. When we have any ſuit to make to thoſe, who have it in their power to render us happy or unfortunate, by the grant or denial of our requeſts, we are diligent to enquire and obſerve what will be the moſt proper times of our addreſſing our ſelves to them; when they are moſt at leiſure, or moſt in humour; when they can beſt attend to hear our caſe, and when they are beſt diſpos'd to favour it; when we are likely to be leaſt impertinent, and leaſt burdenſom; and by conſequence leaſt in danger of ſhocking them, by an ill-choſen importunity.

NOW were we as careful to promote the ſpiritual intereſt of our brethren, as we are to advance our own temporal gain; were we as deſirous to work upon them for their ſoul's good, as for ſome petty advantage to our fortunes, and if we were ſincere Chriſtians we ſhould be much more ſo, we ſhould be always looking out for the fitteſt opportunities to admoniſh and reprove them; we ſhould acquaint our ſelves with their particular tempers and humours; we ſhould obſerve the ebbs and flows of theſe; we ſhould diſcern when they were beſt diſpos'd, by the preſent frame of their minds, to hearken to good advice; when they were moſt ſoft and capable of impreſſions; when they moſt laid themſelves open to our attacks; when their paſſions were in leaſt danger of being ruffled by reproof; when there happens ſuch a lucky combination of circumſtances, that we find our ſelves as it were invited to this charitable office, and do not abruptly break in upon it, but are as it were led into it by the preſent opportunity. What the moſt proper times for reproof are, cannot be determin'd by any general rules: theſe depend upon the different tempers and diſpoſitions of men, and upon a great variety of other accidents, which will not eaſily come within the compaſs and reſtraint of ſet rules: the diſcernment of them, the watching for them, and the cloſing with them, muſt be left to each man's diſcretion: only this, I think, may be admitted as a general rule, that the times we ought to chooſe for the reproving our brethren, ought to be when they are in private, and when they are cool; when they are by themſelves, ſo that our reproofs may not look like reviling them; and when they are themſelves, ſo that our reproofs may not enrage them. Wiſe phyſicians wait for an intermiſſion of the fit, before they apply their medicines; and if we would have reproofs work effectually for the cure of our brethren, we ought to wait till the ferment of their paſſions is laid, that the remedies we make uſe of, by being critically applied, may have their deſir'd effect. That we ſhould reprove our brethren, not in publick, but in private, we have the expreſs command of our Saviour, *Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.* Matt. 18. 15.

SINCE therefore there is ſuch a beauty in things done in their proper time, ſuch an indecency in things done unſeaſonably; ſince there is a proper time for reproof, and a proper time for ſilence; ſince a timely reproof is like to have ſo good effects, and an untimely one is like to do much harm, and ſure to do no good; as we are to reprove only upon proper occaſions, and none but proper perſons; ſo are we upon ſuch occaſions to reprove ſuch perſons only at proper times.

THE laſt point of prudence to be obſerv'd in our reproving, is that we ſhould do it in a proper manner.

I DO not here ſpeak of the qualifications requir'd in the reprover, ſuch as meekneſs, humility, and freedom from thoſe faults for which he reproves others; for thoſe are diſtinct requiſites to an effectual reproof, over and above that prudence, which alone I am now recommending; but at preſent I ſpeak of that artful and dextrous way of reproving, which is moſt likely to make our reproofs receiv'd eaſily, and to render them effectual for the amendment of our brethren. There is need of all the addreſs poſſible, to acquit one's ſelf well in the management of a duty ſo nice and ſo difficult as reproof is. Nothing is more diſagreeable in its own nature than cenſure; and there is need of a great deal of artifice to make it ſupportable. That ſelf-love, pride, and vainglory, which reign in the hearts of wicked men, and which are not wholly ſubdued in the very beſt, make them very ſenſible of any thing which affects them in ſo tender a part, as reproof doth. It is neceſſary therefore that we ſhould ſummon up all our ſkill, to prevent ſuch miſchievous effects of our reproof, and to ſweeten a thing, which is in its own nature ſo bitter and unpalatable. The wiſdom of the ancients ſhew'd it ſelf in nothing more, than in finding out ſuch ways of applying their wholſom counſels for the reformation of mankind, as might render them leaſt ſhocking, and moſt profitable. Their experience ſhew'd them that plain, direct, blunt reproofs were more apt to provoke than to reclaim, and therefore they choſe artificial, indirect, refin'd ways of reproving, which were likely to be leſs grating, and more effectual. This gave the firſt riſe to fables; in which the vices and follies of men were repreſented, not openly and bare-fac'd, but under a diſguiſe: birds and beaſts were the immediate actors, but the reproof was to reach farther; and the application being left to the hearer or reader of the fable, he had room to make a right uſe of the reproof, without having any reaſon to be offended with the reprover.

I MIGHT inſtance in ſeveral other methods, found out in the firſt ages, and practis'd by polite and learned men in all ages ſince, whereby they have ſoftned the harſhneſs of reproofs, and took care to make them more uſeful, by contriving that they ſhould be leſs diſagreeable: but I ſhall content my ſelf in mentioning only one, but that a very proper inſtance of this artificial and indirect way of reproving, which was by parables. Of theſe we have ſeveral both in the Old and New Teſtament, and all ſo contriv'd, as to convey to the perſons concern'd a ſenſe of their guilt in ſuch a manner, as was leaſt likely to offend, and moſt likely to reform them. The firſt and moſt ancient of this kind, either in ſacred or prophane ſtory, is, I think, that of *Jotham*, concerning the trees chuſing a king over them, which we find recorded, *Judges* 9.v.8. *Jotham* was to convince the *Shechemites* of their folly and ſin in laying aſide the family of *Jerubbael*, who had been their protector and deliverer, and in ſetting up *Abimelech* to be their king, one who was meanly born, and an oppreſſor. Now to have made a panegyrick on his father directly might have been invidious; to have ſet forth the oppreſſions of *Abimelech* in expreſs terms, might have been dangerous; to have charg'd them bluntly with ingratitude and rebellion, would have been highly provoking. He therefore repreſents his father's, and his family's merits by the fatneſs of the olive-tree, the ſweetneſs of the fig-tree, and the ſprightlineſs of the vine. The bramble's
v. 15. haughty ſpeech unto the trees, *If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your truſt in my ſhadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon*, was very proper to form in them a juſt notion of the arrogance, the cruelty, and, at the ſame time, the contemptible meanneſs of *Abimelech*. And the humble

ble addreſs of all the trees unto the bramble, ſaying, *Come thou and reign over us*, was a fit repreſentation of their baſeneſs in ſubmitting themſelves to the yoke of ſo mean, ſo inſolent, and ſo cruel an uſurper. They muſt needs be convinc'd of the folly of ſuch a choice, when they conſider'd the trees as the electors; and therefore they could not withſtand the force of the conviction, when they came to apply the parable to themſelves. There are other ways of reproving, which tho' they are not exactly after the manner of parables, agree with them in this, that they ſhew ſinners their crimes, without any diſparagement to their perſons. When we laſh the extravagancies of a diſſolute perſon before another, who is guilty of the ſame; when we praiſe liberality to a covetous perſon, temperance to one who is debauch'd, ſincerity to an hypocrite, or any other virtue to one who is remarkable for the contrary vice; when we put on a jocular air, and rather rally, than reprove, an offender; when we give him remote hints of a fault we care not to charge him cloſely with; when we make uſe of theſe, or any other methods, to convince him of his guilt, without provoking him; we then reprove him in that manner, which prudence requires. v. 14.

THUS have I gone thro' the ſeveral parts of a prudent and wiſe reproof: the occaſion of it muſt be ſuch as will juſtifie our reproving; the perſons muſt be ſuch, as are in no danger of being made worſe by it; the time of it muſt be ſuch, as is ſeaſonable; the manner of it ſuch as is moſt likely to reclaim, without offending, the perſons reprov'd.

WHAT hath been ſaid hath been, throughout, ſo practical, that it needs no application. The other qualifications requir'd in the reprover, that he ſhould do it with meekneſs, and with humility, and that he ſhould be innocent of thoſe faults for which he reproves others, I muſt reſerve to another opportunity.

SER-

SERMON L.

Brotherly Reproof.

ROM. X. 1.

The fourth Sermon on this Text.

Brethren, my heart's deſire and prayer to God for Iſrael is, that they might be ſav'd.

I AM ſtill upon the weighty and important duty incumbent on all Chriſtians, to deſire and to promote the ſalvation of thoſe who neglect their own. How hearty, vigorous, and active this deſire ought to be, and what thoſe ſeveral methods are, by which we may moſt effectually compaſs, what we are bound thus eagerly to deſire, I have at large explain'd to you. Among other ways of promoting the ſalvation of others, I have ſingled out one eſpecially, which being too apt to be neglected by us, abſolutely neceſſary to be practis'd, extremely difficult to be practis'd aright, and of great influence to the ſalvation of our brethren, where perform'd as it ought, deſerv'd our more particular conſideration; and that I told you was the reproof of our brethren for their ſins. I have ſhewn our obligation to this duty from reaſon, and from revelation; from the Law of *Moſes*, and the Goſpel of Chriſt; from the natural tendency reproof hath in it ſelf to reclaim ſinners, and the ſupernatural efficiency it hath to this end thro' the cooperation of God's Spirit; from the great benefit accruing to our brethren, and the little or no detriment likely to enſue to our ſelves, by reproof; from the teſtimony of the wiſeſt, and the example of the beſt men; and from all the other topicks, from whence we can prove our obligation to any other duty of our holy Religion.

AND that this duty, to which I prov'd we were ſo indiſpenſably oblig'd, might be faithfully diſcharg'd, by us, to the glory of God, to the benefit of our brethren, and to the comfort of our own ſouls; that it might be effectual to thoſe ends for which it was deſign'd, and not miſcarry for want of being manag'd with due caution and reſerve, I undertook to ſhew what that manner of reproof is, which is moſt likely to turn to a good account; what thoſe qualifications are, which are requir'd in reproof, to make it effectual to our neighbour's good. Now the cautions neceſſary to be obſerv'd in our reproving others are theſe:

I. THAT we ſhould do it with prudence.
II. THAT we ſhould do it with meekneſs.
III. THAT we ſhould do it with humility.
IV. THAT we ſhould take care to be free from thoſe faults for which we reprove others.

THE characters of a prudent and diſcreet reproof I have already mark'd out, and ſhewn that reproof is then ſuch as prudence requires, when it is given on proper occaſions, to proper perſons, at proper times, and in a proper manner. What thoſe proper occaſions are which call for our reproof; who thoſe perſons are whom we ſhould reprove; what thoſe times are in which our reproof will be ſeaſonable; what that particular manner is which is like to make our reproof moſt ſerviceable; as far as they fall under general rules, I have pointed out to you; and have all along guided my ſelf and you, in the treating of this ſubject, by thoſe directions which are given for the right performance of this duty in the Word of God. Having ſhewn thence both the great effects aſcrib'd to a prudent reproof, and the ſeveral ingredients of a wiſe reproof, I proceed now to the

Second CAUTION neceſſary to be obſerv'd in our reproving our brethren, which is, that we ſhould do it with meekneſs.

WHAT the Apoſtle St. *James* has obſerv'd concerning anger, and hath given as a reaſon why we ſhould *be ſlow to wrath*, to wit, becauſe *the wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God*, is more eſpecially verified in that anger which mixes it ſelf with reproofs; it is very improper to produce thoſe effects which charity aims at in reproving; and it is very unſuitable to that temper of ſoul, which the righteous law of God requires in a charitable reprover. For in anger there is always ſome mixture of hatred and ill-will; we are puſh'd on by this paſſion to do ſome miſchief to the perſon whom we are angry at: it ariſes from an apprehenſion of ſome injury done to us, and it puts us upon finding out ways of retaliation, by grieving thoſe who have griev'd us. But now the riſe and ſpring of reproof either is, or ought to be, a very different principle; it is ſo far from being the reſult of hatred or malice, that it is an inſtance of the moſt ſincere love and hearty affection; becauſe we are *not to hate our brother in our heart*, therefore are we requir'd by the Law *in any wiſe to rebuke him*: ſo that we are very far from anſwering the obligation or intent of the Law, if we therefore rebuke him, becauſe we hate him; or if we ſo rebuke him, as to expreſs any hatred or ill-will towards him by our rebuking him. What we ſhould propoſe to our ſelves by our reproof, is the greateſt good our brother is capable of; ſo that anger, which always aims at the miſchief of another, muſt be a very improper attendant on that charitable action, which is deſign'd for our neighbour's greateſt benefit.

Jam. 1. 19, 20.

Levit. 19. 17.

AN injury either really done us, or apprehended as done us, is the occaſion of our anger: but when our brother trangreſſes the laws of God, this tranſgreſſion doth not procure hurt to us, but to his own ſoul; he himſelf is the perſon injur'd by his ſin, and not we; the guilt affects him; the puniſhment which that guilt draws after it will fall upon him; he lays himſelf open to the threats and curſes of the Law; he expoſes him-

himſelf to the ſcorn of men, and to the wounds of his own conſcience; he enſlaves himſelf to the dominion of ſin, and to the power of Satan; he renders himſelf obnoxious to the judgments of an angry and avenging God; he provokes God to pour down on his head both temporal and ſpiritual judgments in this life, and he *treaſures up to himſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*; ſo that he is, upon many accounts, a much fitter object of our pity and compaſſion, than of our anger and indignation. Had we a proper and direct authority over our brother; had we a right to give laws to his actions, and to exact of him an account of his conduct; were we inveſted with a power of inflicting puniſhment on him in proportion to his demerits; yet meekneſs would be a neceſſary qualification for the due exerciſe of ſuch a power. A mildneſs of diſpoſition, and a maſtery over the exceſſes of anger, have been always reckon'd the chief characters of a good magiſtrate; and even thoſe *rulers who are to be a terror to evil works*, and who are *avengers to execute wrath upon them that do wickedly*, are bound to temper their judgments with mercy, to avenge without paſſion, and even to execute wrath without being imbitter'd by it.

THIS ſweetneſs of temper is more eſpecially requir'd in thoſe governors *who watch for the ſouls of men, as they that muſt give*, and therefore muſt take, *an account*. Theſe more immediate *ſervants of the Lord* 2 Tim. 2.24, 25. *muſt not ſtrive, but be gentle unto all men, patient, in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves*; they muſt *reprove*, they muſt *rebuke*; c. 4. 2. but they muſt do it *with all long-ſuffering*, as St. *Paul* hath taught them, both by his advice to *Timothy*, and by his own example. When he inflicted Church-cenſures, he did not more puniſh the cenſur'd perſon than himſelf: the grief he caus'd was intended for the amendment, and not for the hurt, of the party griev'd; and his tender concern for his brethren, and fellow-feeling of what the members of Chriſt ſuffer'd, made him groan as one ſmitten with thoſe very ſtrokes, with which he chaſtis'd ſinners. 1 Cor. 4. 21. He asks indeed the *Corinthians, whether he ſhould come unto them with a rod, or in love, and in the ſpirit of meekneſs*? But he plainly ſhew'd by his conduct, that theſe methods of procedure were not ſo directly oppoſite, but that they might be temper'd one with the other; and that he wanted not love, or the ſpirit of meekneſs, even then when he came with a rod. For having in this former Letter treated them with an air of ſeverity, in a ſecond he ſoftens the harſhneſs of his cenſure, by aſſu- 2 Cor. 2. 4. rances of his pity and love: *Out of much affliction and anguiſh of heart*, ſaith he, *I wrote unto you with many tears, not that you ſhould be griev'd, but that you might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.* What he had wrote with ſome ſharpneſs was matter of grief to them, but it was much more ſo to him; it caus'd much affliction and anguiſh in his heart, and it fetch'd plenty of tears from his eyes: the grief they found was not the ultimate aim and direct intention of his reproofs, but deſign'd only in order to their amendment; nor was it the effect of anger or ill-will, but an inſtance of his ſuper-abundant love.

NOW if thoſe reproofs which are back'd with authority, are to be thus temper'd with a ſpirit of mildneſs; if anger, which properly terminates in the deſire of revenge, is not allowable even in thoſe who are appointed to be the miniſters of vengeance; much more ought the reproofs of private and unauthoris'd perſons to be mild and gentle, calm and diſpaſſionate, and ſuch as may be properly expreſſive of that charity and affection, that love and tenderneſs, that mercy and compaſſion, from whence brotherly

therly reproof, as far it is a Chriſtian duty, always proceeds. The ſentences of civil magiſtrates, and the cenſures of church paſtors are acts of juſtice, and deſign'd for the terror of others; but the reproofs of private Chriſtians are purely acts of charity, and deſign'd only for the amendment of our offending brethren. In executing juſtice, anger, which might give an edge to the execution, might ſeem tolerable; and yet all Moraliſts have thought it expedient that civil governors ſhould be as free from paſſion, as the very laws by which they act; and the Goſpel has made this mildneſs an indiſpenſable qualification in ſpiritual governors: How then can anger be tolerable in thoſe reproofs, which being acts not of juſtice, but charity; not of perſons particularly call'd to this work, but of perſons voluntarily entring upon it; not of ſuch who have a right to demand, but of ſuch who muſt uſe art to gain a fair hearing, ought to be ſo ſoftned by a ſpirit of meekneſs, as may procure to them that admittance by reaſon of their temper, to which they have no title from their authority? Eagerneſs and vehemence are always ſhocking and diſagreeable; but they are never more grievous, never more inſupportable, than when they accompany a reproof. There is implanted in us ſuch a ſtrong deſire of being well eſteem'd, ſuch an unconquerable averſion to any thing which argues others to have a mean opinion of us, that reproof, tho' manag'd with never ſo much art and ſweetneſs, is always unacceptable: how much more grating muſt it be, when, inſtead of being ſweetned by ſoft words, it is made ſowrer by the rude and ſhocking manner in which it is given? When an air of fierceneſs and outrage is added to the natural bitterneſs of a rebuke? When we find our ſelves not only cenſur'd, but inſulted; not only reprimanded, but revil'd; not only found fault with, but expos'd by one who pretends to chaſtiſe us, only becauſe he loves us, but chaſtiſes us in ſuch a manner as reliſhes more of the rancour of malice, than the tenderneſs of love?

THAT which we ought principally to aim at in our reproofs, in order to make them effectual, is to convince the ſinner whom we rebuke, that what we do is neither out of a ſpirit of contradiction, nor a principle of ill-nature, but out of a true tenderneſs for his ſpiritual welfare, and a ſincere deſire of his eternal ſalvation. But how ſhall we work in him this perſwaſion, which is abſolutely neceſſary to render our reproofs available for his ſoul's good, if the manner of our reproofs betrays us to be carried away by reſentment, and ſhews rather a diſpoſition to make him uneaſie at preſent, than to render him eternally happy hereafter? We reprove our brother for his tranſgreſſions of God's law; and this we do out of a pretence of charity to his ſoul; but we reprove him in ſuch a manner, as ſhews that we are glad of the occaſion, and pleas'd in the exerciſe of reproof. How is our reproof in this caſe a better argument of our love, than the pleaſure we take in reproving is of our malice? When reproof, ſingly conſider'd, may be the effect of hatred as well as love, and reviling is the part of an enemy rather than of a friend; why ſhould he rather think that he is belov'd, becauſe he is reprov'd, than that he is hated, becauſe he is revil'd? We reprove our offending brother for a ſin we apprehend him guilty of; zeal for God's honour incites us, as we pretend, to this charitable office of reproof: but meekneſs is as much a duty by the tenour of the Goſpel, as that which we blame him for the omiſſion of; wrath is as much and perhaps as great a ſin, as that we reprove him for: how then do we ſhew our zeal for God's honour, if, at the ſame time we blame another for his breach of God's laws, we our ſelves are guilty of tranſgreſſing his commandments? We rebuke our brother, that we may not ſuffer ſin to dwell upon him; but we rebuke him with that roughneſs of language, which is apt to provoke him: we reprove him for being led away by his paſſions, and acting contrary to the rules of reaſon, and the precepts of Religion; but we reprove him in ſuch an exaſperating manner as is moſt likely to ſtir up his paſſions, to diſcompoſe his mind, and to diſorder his thoughts, and by conſequence to render him incapable of acting as reaſon and Religion direct. In reproving our brother we ought to arm our ſelves with all that coolneſs and ſedateneſs, which is neceſſary to fortifie us againſt any impreſſions, which the anger he may conceive at our reproof might make upon us; we ought to have ſo much phlegm, as that we might be proof againſt any bitterneſs of ſpeech, which our cenſures of him might extort: but inſtead of preparing our ſelves to bear the outrages of his anger, without any emotion in our own breaſts, we inflame him by our fire; we raiſe that ſtorm which we ſhould ſtudy to lay; and give the firſt ſpring to thoſe diſorderly motions, which we ſhould be ſtudious to prevent, and ready to compoſe.

IT hath before been prov'd at large, that prudence is a neceſſary requiſite in our reproofs; but there will be no room for prudence, where paſſion bears any ſway. Thoſe who ſuffer themſelves to be carried away by the irregular tranſports of anger, will not be at leiſure to hearken to thoſe deliberate counſels which prudence ſuggeſts; they will be apt to reprove upon improper occaſions; they will not obſerve that proportion which ought to be obſerv'd betwixt the fault and the reproof; they will rather ſeek out for occaſions to chide, than wait for ſuch as are offer'd; they will not give themſelves leiſure to conſider whether the perſons they quarrel with are more likely to be reclaim'd, or to be made worſe, by reproof; they will not wait for ſeaſonable times and fit opportunities to reprove; they will not deliberate calmly with themſelves after what manner they ſhould ſo form their reproofs, as may make them moſt ſerviceable, and leaſt provoking. Raſhneſs, heedleſsneſs, warmth, and haſte are the proper effects of anger; all of them inconſiſtent with the meaſures of prudence, and therefore all of them improper to have any ſhare in that reproof, of which it is an eſſential property, that it ſhould be diſcreet. There is that cloſe connexion betwixt meekneſs and wiſdom, that one cannot ſubſiſt without the other; and therefore the Apoſtle St. *James* hath joyn'd theſe two qualities together, Jam. 3. 13. as neceſſary concomitants one of another: *Who is a wiſe man and endued with knowledge amongſt you? Let him ſhew out of a good converſation his works with meekneſs of wiſdom.* And it is obſervable that the ſpecial work which the Apoſtle would have ſhewn *with meekneſs of wiſdom,* is the right government of the tongue, and the due ma- v. 16, 17, 18. nagement of reproof. *Where envying and ſtrife is, there,* ſaith he, *is confuſion and every evil work; but the wiſdom that is from above,* the wiſdom that he had ſhewn them was requir'd in reproof, *is peaceable, gentle, and eaſie to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality,* or, as we read it in the margin, without wrangling; *and the fruit of righteouſneſs is ſown in peace of them that make peace.* The Apo- v. 10. ſtle in that chapter ſpeaks of it as a ſurpriſing paradox, that *out of the ſame mouth* ſhould *proceed bleſſing and curſing*; that *with the ſame tongue wherewith we bleſs God, even the Father, we* ſhould *curſe men, which are made after the ſimilitude of God*; *theſe things,* he warns *his*

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brethren, ought not ſo to be. But it is ſtill a more unaccountable paradox, that out of the ſame mouth, at the ſame inſtant, in the ſame breath, ſhould proceed bleſſing and curſing; bleſſing of our brother, by turning him from his iniquities; and curſing of him, by opprobrious language; bleſſing of him by the charitable office of reproof, and curſing of him by uncharitable bitterneſs in reviling; *My brethren, theſe things ought not ſo to be. Doth a fountain ſend forth at the ſame place ſweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries? either a vine figs? ſo can no fountain both yield ſalt water and freſh.* Jam. 3. 11, 12. All theſe contradictions in nature may aſſoon be reconcil'd, as virulence can be made conſiſtent with charity, or the bitterneſs of ſcolding with the meek ſpirit of reproof.

THE Son of *Sirach* hath told us that *a ſcold ſhall be ſent for to drive away an enemy*; Ecclus. 26, 27. and ſurely one of that character muſt be very improper to bring back a friend. The *Pſalmiſt* therefore with good reaſon deſir'd he might meet with a meek and gentle reprover; *let the righteous*, that is the merciful, *ſmite me, it ſhall be a kindneſs; and let him reprove me, it ſhall be an excellent oyl, which ſhall not break my head.* Pſ. 141. 5. The admonitions of the merciful are ſtrokes, but they are the ſtrokes of a friend; theſe *reproofs enter more into a wiſe man, than an hundred ſtripes into a fool*; Prov. 17. 10. they make as deep a wound as thoſe of an enemy, but they do not cauſe ſo much ſmart; they are *an excellent oyl*, they have both its ſearching power to inſinuate themſelves into the part affected, and its healing power to work a ſafe, and at the ſame time an eaſie cure. This metaphor of wounds for reproofs is common to prophane with ſacred writers; and a *Latin* Moraliſt has well obſerv'd, that we ſhould in this charitable office act like cautious phyſicians; that we ſhould as ſeldom and as unwillingly venture upon reproof, as they do upon cutting and burning; that we ſhould never do it but in caſes of neceſſity, when all other medicines fail; and that in our application of this ſevere remedy we ſhould be free from anger, with which nothing can be done regularly, nothing conſiderately. No one would care to truſt himſelf in the hands of a phyſician, who ſhould preſcribe in a fit of anger; no one, who was to be cut and burn'd, would deſire the operation ſhould be perform'd by one in a paſſion. In ſuch caſes there may be ſome danger in being too fearful and tender; but certainly there is much more danger in being frantick and outrageous.

SINCE therefore in anger there is ſome mixture of hatred, and reproof ought to proceed purely from a principle of love; ſince an injury done to us is the proper object of anger, and that for which we are to reprove our brother is a wrong done to himſelf; ſince anger aims at the miſchief of another, and doing good to our brother is what we ſhould aim at in reproof; ſince anger is excluded from having any ſhare in publick cenſures, which are acts of juſtice, and therefore is much more excluded from private admonitions, which are merely acts of charity; ſince reproof is in its own nature ſo unwelcome, that it wants rather to be ſweetned by mildneſs, than to be imbitter'd by anger; ſince reproofs ought to be intended for the amendment of our brother, and anger is more likely to exaſperate than to reclaim him; ſince prudence is a neceſſary qualification in our reproofs, and it is ſcarcely poſſible to be at the ſame time angry and wiſe; ſince anger carries us headlong to obloquy and reviling, and we are as ſtrictly forbid to revile, as we are commanded to reprove; ſince reproof is intended for the good of our brother's ſoul, and anger is likely to diſorder his ſoul, and ſure to hurt our own; ſince it is as eſſential a property of charity not to be provok'd, as it is to reprove; ſince we are as expreſsly requir'd to *reſtore one who is overtaken in a fault with the ſpirit of meekneſs*, as we are to reſtore him at all; it is from all theſe reaſons evident, that meekneſs is another qualication neceſſary in thoſe who reprove.

THE *Third* thing requir'd in our reproving others is, that we ſhould do it with humility.

THERE is that affinity betwixt meekneſs and humility, that moſt of the reaſons which have been brought to prove that there ought to be no mixture of anger in our reproving others, do equally prove that our cenſures ought to be free from pride. The reaſon aſſign'd by St. *Paul* for reproving ſinners with meekneſs, is the conſideration of our own frailty: *Brethren*, ſaith he, *if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are ſpiritual reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs, conſidering thy ſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted.* Gal. 6. 1. Now our being liable to temptation is as ſtrong a reaſon for our being humble, as it is for our being meek. We ought not to be angry at our brother, becauſe he was over-born by the ſtrength of the temptation; and we ought not to inſult over him, becauſe, if the ſame temptation ſhould beſet us, we alſo might be overcome. Our brother is overtaken by a fault, and we are as yet exempt from it; he is faln, and we ſtand, and hence we take occaſion to be proud: but the Apoſtle's inference is the reverſe of this; when he had given to the *Corinthians* a catalogue of their fore-fathers ſins, and the puniſhments that had attended them, he would not have them make ſuch a perverſe uſe of the faults of others, as to value themſelves as being free from the like guilt, and therefore ſecure againſt the like judgments; but 1 Cor. 10. 12. the concluſion he drew from ſuch premiſes was this; *wherefore let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall.* The faults of others therefore, if we take them in a right view, are not incentives to pride, but motives to humility: we muſt not argue that becauſe they are faln, and we ſtand, therefore we have reaſon to inſult over them; but becauſe they are faln, we alſo may fall, and therefore ought to treat them with that candour, with which we our ſelves, when faln, would be treated.

THE ſame way of reaſoning St. *Paul* uſes to the *Romans*, and the ſame way of thinking and acting he recommends to the believing *Gentiles*, when he repreſents to them the guilt and danger of the *Jewiſh* unbelievers: Rom. 11. 20. *Well, becauſe of unbelief they were broken off, and thou ſtandeſt by faith.* The natural inference, which pride would tempt the Gentile-converts to make from this doctrine, was to inſult over the *Jews* for their *unbelief*, by which *they were broken off*, and to value themſelves upon their *faith, by which they themſelves ſtood*; but the inference which the Apoſtle teaches them to make is very different, *be not high-minded, but fear.* And this inference he ſupports with a very v. 21, 22, 23. ſtrong and convincing reaſon; *If God ſpar'd not the natural branches, take heed leſt he alſo ſpare not thee. Behold therefore the goodneſs and ſeverity of God; on them which fell, ſeverity; but towards thee, goodneſs, if thou continue in his goodneſs; otherwiſe thou alſo ſhalt be cut off. And they alſo, if they bide not ſtill in unbelief, ſhall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again.* The force of which reaſoning, as far as it is applicable to offenders in general, ſtands thus: Thoſe who ſtand may fall; thoſe who are faln, may recover their ground; the condition of the former is not ſecure, the condition of the latter is not deſpe-

deſperate; the former are not inviolably good, the latter are not irrecoverably bad; the ſtate of neither is unalterable, but they may change conditions one with the other; ſo that they who are now faln may then ſtand, when thoſe who now ſtand are faln, and may then have the ſame advantage over theſe, as theſe now have over them: when they are faln, they will be unwilling to be inſulted; whilſt therefore they ſtand, they ought not to trample upon thoſe who are faln. This reaſoning will ſtill be ſtronger, if it be conſider'd how it comes to paſs that ſome ſtand, whilſt others fall: thoſe who ſtand do it not by any ſtability of their own, but by the grace of God: the ſtrength by which they ſtand is not natural to them, or acquir'd by any act of theirs, but is the free gift of God: their ſtanding therefore is no proof that they are not as weak as thoſe which are faln; it being no argument of ſtrength, but of weakneſs, not to ſtand without being ſupported. They do indeed differ from others; but this difference doth not ſet them above others, becauſe it is not owing to themſelves, but deriv'd from God. *For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what haſt thou that thou didſt not receive? Now if thou didſt receive it, why doſt thou glory as if thou hadſt not receiv'd it?* 1 Cor. 4. 7.

And as our ſtanding is no good reaſon for our triumphing over thoſe which are faln, becauſe the ſtrength by which we ſtand is not our own, but borrow'd; ſo is it ſtill a leſs reaſon for arrogance, becauſe we are ſure to ſtand no longer than whilſt we are humble. For as it is an undoubted truth that by grace we ſtand, ſo is it as certain that this grace is precarious, and depends upon our humility: For, *God reſiſteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.* Jam. 4. 6. It is abſurd therefore to be proud becauſe we ſtand, and to inſult over thoſe which are faln; ſince pride is ſure to forfeit that grace by which we ſtand, and to lay us upon the level with thoſe over whom we pretend to inſult. Be our reproofs never ſo neceſſary, be they never ſo juſt, never ſo prudent; be the occaſions of them ſuch as are inviting, the perſons ſuch as ſeem reclaimable, the times of them ſeaſonable, the manner in which we reprove ſuch as ſhews our temper and conduct; yet, after all, the leaſt indication of pride, the leaſt ſuſpicion of our being influenc'd by it, will make them ineffectual. For the firſt thought, which naturally offers it ſelf to the perſon whom we reprove, is, that we find fault with him merely out of a principle of pride; that the only deſign we have in reproving him, is to ſhew that we are free from thoſe ſins, into which he ſuffers himſelf to fall; that we have a greater command over our ſelves than he has; that we have got the dominion over thoſe luſts, to which he is ſtill a ſlave; that we are ſtrong, and he weak; that we are fit to be his guides and inſtructors, and that he wants to be under our conduct and diſcipline; that we are glad to ſhew our ſuperiority over him in chaſtiſing him, and that we take this way to depreſs him, that we may thereby exalt our ſelves.

Now this prejudice we ought to remove with all diligence; we ought therefore to be particularly cautious that there be no appearance of pride in our reproofs; and the only way of appearing humble, is to be really what we would appear. Let us therefore repreſent to our ſelves how unbecoming, and how pernicious pride is; how ill it becomes us to be proud upon that very account, which ought to make us humble; how abſurd it is to be high-minded by reaſon of thoſe ſins of others, which ought to make us fear; how unſuitable pride is to creatures ſo frail, and ſo impotent, as we naturally are; how great an obſtacle we put to the reformation of our brother, by giving him any umbrage of our reproving him out of pride; and how we forfeit all the hopes of a reward for our reproofs, tho' they ſhould be ſerviceable to him, by ſuffering our ſelves to act by ſo unwarrantable a principle; how ridiculous it is to value our ſelves upon thoſe ſpiritual advantages, which are not owing to our ſelves, and which we are ſure to loſe, if we value our ſelves for them; how acceptable to God that charity is, which inclines us to reprove our brother; and how abominable in the ſight of God that pride is, which diſpoſes us to contemn our brother; and conſequently what an irreconcilable oppoſition there is betwixt pride and reproof.

THE *Fourth* and laſt qualification, which I told you was requir'd in our reproving our brethren, is, that we ſhould be free from thoſe faults for which we reprove others.

THIS is a property as eſſential to reproof, as neceſſary to render it effectual to our brother's good, as any of the former. It is expreſsly requir'd by the Goſpel; and it is ſo obvious a qualification, that all Moraliſts have preſt it with the ſame earneſtneſs, and almoſt in the very ſame language, as the Scriptures do. Matt. 7. 3. *Why beholdeſt thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but conſidereſt not the beam that is in thine own eye*, is a queſtion which our Saviour asks, and to which he who reproves others for ſins of which he is himſelf guilty, will never be able to give a ſatisfactory anſwer. The folly of ſuch an attempt is prov'd by the impoſſibility of its being ſucceſsful; for, as our Saviour goes on to v. 4. ask, *how wilt thou ſay to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold a beam is in thine own eye*? With what confidence canſt thou tell him of his mote, whilſt he can retort upon thee, by telling thee of thy beam? With what face canſt thou pretend to pull out his mote, whilſt thy own beam unqualifies thee for the buſineſs of an expert oculiſt? The endeavour after a thing ſo unfeaſible is ridiculous, and the affectation of upbraiding him with ſins which thou allow- v. 5. eſt thy ſelf in, argues thee to be an hypocritical pretender. *Thou hypocrite, firſt caſt out the beam out of thine own eye, and then ſhalt thou ſee clearly to caſt out the mote out of thy brother's eye.* Firſt reform thy own life, and then reclaim others: firſt judge thy ſelf, and then thou mayſt the eaſier be admitted to be a judge over others.

WE have had frequent occaſion to compare reproof with medicines; and the analogy holds in this, as well as other inſtances, that the reprover ſhould take care to guard himſelf from the reach of that bitter Luke 4. 23. ſarcaſm, *Phyſician heal thy ſelf*. He who reproves his brother, would appear to be animated with zeal for God's honour, with charity for his brother's ſoul, with love for piety, and with a deteſtation of ſin. But how can he be thought jealous of God's glory, who diſhonours him both by thoſe ſins which are common to him with the party reprov'd, and by the groſſer ſin of hypocriſie? How can he have a ſincere love for his brother's ſoul, who has no charity for his own? How can he pretend to have any regard for Religion, who knowingly doth thoſe things, which not only the Word of God, but his own mouth, out of the Word of God, condemns? How can he pretend to have any averſion to ſin, which, whilſt he reproves in others, and allows in himſelf, he plainly graſps at the monopoly of? What good effect can the reproofs of ſuch an one have, who plainly ſhews that he is not perſwaded of what he ſaith,

ſince

ſince his practice gives the lie to his diſcourſe? His words eſpouſe the intereſt of virtue, but his actions are engag'd on the ſide of vice: what he ſaith is for the ſupport of Religion, and what he doth tends to overthrow it. Now actions have been always deem'd the beſt interpreters of mens thoughts; and why ſhould he think, that men will judge of his inward ſentiments rather by ſuch fallible ſigns, than by unerring characters? How can he expect that his godly reproofs ſhould be of greater prevalence to reclaim his brother, than his ungodly example to corrupt him?

I AM ſenſible that I am now entred upon a common and beaten ſubject, which has been ſo exhauſted, that nothing new can be offer'd upon it, nothing that your own thoughts will not eaſily ſuggeſt. Writers ſacred and prophane, eccleſiaſtical and civil, ancient and modern, foreign and domeſtick, ſober and licentious, grave and facetious, have all been very copious and profuſe upon this fruitful argument. Thoſe who have had a talent in ſatyr have laſh'd no vices more ſeverely, than they have done the impudence and hypocriſie of ſuch, as have ſet up for reformers of other mens manners, whilſt their own have been infamous; and thoſe who have choſe rather to render ſinners ridiculous, than to ſcourge them for their crimes, have repreſented no ſort of men under ſo contemptible a character, as theſe vain, formal, hypocritical reprovers. Thoſe texts of Scripture, and canons of the Church, which require the miniſters of the Goſpel to be blameleſs and exemplary, are built upon the neceſſity of purity of life, in order to enforce the doctrine of thoſe who admoniſh others: and all thoſe aſperſions, that either with, or without colour, are thrown upon that holy order of men, preſuppoſe it as an evident and well known truth, that thoſe who reprove others ought to be innocent themſelves. There is no language, which doth not afford ſome proverbial ſaying to expreſs this celebrated truth; ſo that it is as familiar in the mouths of the vulgar, as in the writings of the learned; and there are none ſo ignorant as to want being taught it, how few ſoever they are who conſciencioully practiſe it. Nothing therefore need, nothing can be added to what has been ſo often, ſo much better, ſaid upon this ſubject. Only it may be proper to obſerve, that tho' thoſe who are themſelves guilty are unqualified to reprove others for the ſame ſins they are chargeable with, yet none are hereby abſolutely diſpens'd with for the omiſſion of a duty ſo neceſſary, and ſo obligatory upon all Chriſtians, as reproof has been prov'd to be. Our obligation to this duty may be ſuſpended by our being unfit for it, but is not thereby extinguiſh'd. Whilſt we are our ſelves guilty, we ought not to reprove; but we ought to make haſte to reform our ſelves, that we may reprove. We are under an incapacity to reform others, whilſt we want to be reform'd; but this is an incapacity which is owing to our ſelves, and we can take no advantage of our own fault. It is the ſame caſe here, as in that of being unworthy to receive the ſacrament: whilſt we are unprepar'd, we ought not to communicate; but this doth not excuſe us for abſtaining from the Lord's ſupper, but is a reaſon why we ſhould prepare our ſelves, that we may communicate. This therefore is one great advantage of reproof, among many others that have been mention'd, that ſince it is a duty incumbent on all, and a duty which cannot be diſcharg'd, as it ought, by thoſe who are themſelves reprovable, it is a ſtrong motive to us to repent of our own ſins, and to reform our own evil practices, that we may thereby be better fitted to reprove and reclaim others.

I HAVE now gone thro' what I had to deliver upon this ſubject. I have prov'd our obligation to this duty of reproving our brethren, by a great variety of arguments; and to make a duty of ſo great neceſſity to be diſcharg'd, the eaſier to be diſcharg'd by us as it ought, I have given ſeveral uſeful directions for the right performance of it. Let us not therefore, by any ſlight excuſes, endeavour to ſhift off from our ſelves a duty, which has been prov'd ſo ſerviceable to the honour of God, to the benefit of our brethren, and to the ſalvation of our own ſouls: let us not appropriate this duty to one order of men, which God has made common to all Chriſtians: let us remember his character, and his curſe, who, when God enquir'd of him concerning his brother, inſolently replied, *am I my brother's keeper?* Let us conſider with what amazement and confuſion we ſhall be ſtruck at the day of judgment, if we ſhould then find any condemn'd to everlaſting torments, whom our reproof might have reſcued: and let us think with our ſelves how much it will add to our happineſs, to ſee plac'd at Chriſt's right hand any of thoſe ſouls, whom our reproofs have help'd to bring over to the paths of righteouſneſs.

Phil. 2. 1,&c. IF *there be therefore any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye one another's joy; having the ſame love, being of one accord, and of one mind. Let nothing be done thro' ſtrife or vain-glory, but in lowlineſs of mind let each* endeavour to make *others better than themſelves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus*: that ſalvation which he reveal'd to us as a Prophet, which he wrought out for us as a Prieſt, which we hope he will at laſt confer on us as our King, let us in our ſeveral ſtations, and according to our ſeveral abilities, communicate to others: for tho' there is no ſalvation in or from any other but Chriſt; tho' there is no name under heaven given among men, whereby we muſt be ſav'd; yet we alſo may be inſtruments under him, and ſubordinate workers together with him, in ſaving each other. For the Scriptures have aſſur'd us, that not only the miniſters of God's Word may be ſaid to ſave themſelves and thoſe which hear them; but in more general terms, that *if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth a ſinner from the error of his way, ſhall ſave his ſoul from death.* Jam. 5. 19,20.

SER-

A

FAREWELL SERMON

PREACH'D AT THE

PARISH-CHURCH

OF

St. *DUNSTAN* in the *Weſt*,

ON

Sunday, *Dec.* 23. 1711.

TO

THE GENTLEMEN

AND OTHER

The Inhabitants of the Pariſh

OF

St. *Dunſtan* in the Weſt.

GENTLEMEN,

HAD it been decent for me, after the many and great favours I had receiv'd from you, to deny any requeſt which you thought it proper to make, this Sermon, which was no more intended for the preſs, than it is fit for it, had never been made publick. But ſince you were not pleas'd to admit of any excuſe for my not printing, I may with *the greater confidence hope to be excus'd by others for printing ſo imperfect a diſcourſe. Your affection to the Preacher, and the occaſion on which it was preach'd, gave it ſome advantage in the hearing, which muſt be loſt with the cool and impartial reader: but this will give me no uneaſineſs, whilſt I have reaſon to hope, that what in the delivery you ſeem'd to be affected with, may, when recollected, make a more laſting impreſſion for the benefit of your ſouls.*

I pray God to recompenſe to you with the bleſſings of this world, and of the next, those kind regards you have ſhewn to,

GENTLEMEN,

Your moſt affectionate Friend,

and humble Servant,

GEORGE SMALRIDGE.

SERMON LI.

The ſeveral Ways of partaking in other men's Sins.

1 Tim. V. 22.

---Neither be partaker of other men's ſins.---

IN my laſt diſcourſe I open'd unto you the nature, and prov'd the neceſſity, of reſtitution. I then took notice, that it extended to all ſorts of wrongs; and that wherever any injuries of any kind were done, there a reparation ſuitable to the injuries was neceſſary. But becauſe moſt perſons, when they hear the duty of reſtitution preſs'd, are apt to reſtrain it to ſuch wrongs, as men do, or ſuffer, in their temporal concerns; becauſe theſe are the injuries which are moſt loudly complain'd of, and for which ſatisfaction is moſt importunately demanded; whilſt other wrongs, of a much more miſchievous tendency, are done without remorſe, and often ſuffer'd too without regret; becauſe human laws have provided for the reparation of ſuch injuries as affect men's properties, whilſt no proviſion is by them made againſt wrongs done to the ſouls of men; becauſe we, who are entruſted with the care of men's ſouls, are moſt nearly concern'd to avert or to remedy thoſe evils, to which they are liable in their ſpiritual capacities; becauſe ſuch injuries as theſe are moſt apt to be overlook'd, and yet at the ſame time moſt proper to be attended to; becauſe ſeveral perſons, who out of conſcience, or rather out of honour, would ſcorn to do thoſe leſſer injuries, do without ſcruple allow themſelves in the practice of theſe greater wrongs; becauſe thoſe, whoſe plentiful condition in this world places them above the temptation of enriching themſelves by defrauding others of their worldly goods, are generally moſt apt to do the greateſt prejudice to the ſouls of men; for theſe reaſons, I think it may be proper to conſider diſtinctly the ſeveral ways of doing wrong to the ſouls of men, that thoſe whoſe conſciences accuſe them of any of theſe wrongs, may apply to themſelves what hath been before deliver'd concerning the indiſpenſable neceſſity of reſtitution. Now we do then wrong to the ſouls of men, when we are in any regard *partakers of their ſins*; and we are then *partakers of their ſins*, when we uſe any means to induce them to ſin; or when we do not uſe thoſe means which are in our power, and which we are in duty bound to uſe, for preſerving or reclaiming them from ſin. But that we may not be loſt in generals; that what I have to offer upon this ſubject may lie more level to all capacities, and be brought nearer home to the conſciences of men, I ſhall deſcend yet lower to particulars; and point out, if not all, yet the principal and moſt uſual ways of participating in other men's ſins.

First we may be partakers of other men's ſins by poiſoning the ſouls of men with erroneous and wicked principles.

By erroneous principles, I do not mean ſuch as are any ways contrary to truth; but only ſuch as are contrary to thoſe truths, the knowledge and belief of which are made the conditions of our ſalvation. Now ſuch deſtructive errors either concern doctrines of faith, or rules of practice: for, in order to our ſalvation, God hath propos'd ſeveral truths, to which we are requir'd to give our aſſent; and hath enjoyn'd ſeveral laws, by which our actions ought to be regulated. Thoſe, therefore, who by their doctrines endeavour either to ſubvert ſuch ſaving truths, or to relax the force of ſuch binding laws, contribute all they can to the hindrance of men's ſalvation. Some ſeem to be of opinion, that it is wholly indifferent what men believe, provided their actions be agreeable to the Laws of God; that men at the laſt day ſhall not be judg'd by their opinions, but by their lives: that no enquiry will be then made, whether they were right or wrong in their principles, but only, whether they were regular, or irregular in their practices. But tho' it is perhaps true, that greater ſtreſs is laid upon our actions than upon our ſentiments; tho' it is certainly true, that no men ſhall be ſav'd for the orthodoxy of their opinions, whoſe lives are contrary to the precepts of our holy Religion; yet, ſince the Goſpel conſiſts as well of doctrines which we are requir'd to believe, as of commands which we are bound to obey; ſince the veracity of God is as much impeach'd by our not aſſenting to the truth of what he affirms, as his authority is affronted by our not complying with what he enjoyns; ſince faith and obedience are made the joynt terms of our ſalvation; ſince we are in the Goſpel commanded to believe ſuch and ſuch truths, and conſequently, however we may diſtinguiſh betwixt matters of faith and matters of duty, faith it ſelf is as much a chriſtian duty, as any other, being equally the object of a poſitive command; ſince our underſtandings ought to be as much in ſubjection to God, as our wills; we may as juſtly be ſhut out of heaven for the perverſeneſs of our opinions, as for the ſinfulneſs of our lives; and therefore thoſe perſons may as deſervedly be charg'd with doing hurt to men's ſouls, and with *being partakers of their ſins*, who teach thoſe erroneous doctrines, which are intended to corrupt their faith, as thoſe who teach wicked and looſe doctrines, more immediately tending to the corruption of manners.

How heinous the guilt of ſuch ſeducers is, we may learn from the grievouſneſs of that puniſhment, which the Scriptures have declar'd to
2 Pet. 2. 1,2,3. be their doom. *There ſhall be falſe teachers among you*, ſaith St. Peter, *who ſhall bring in damnable hereſies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themſelves ſwift deſtruction. And many ſhall follow their pernicious ways, by reaſon of whom the way of truth ſhall be evil ſpoken of --- whoſe judgment now of a long time lingreth not, and*

their damnation ſlumbreth not. The hereſies brought in are declar'd to be *damnable*, hazarding the ſalvation of thoſe who embrace them; and it is but juſt, that thoſe, who are ſo diligent to deſtroy others, ſhould be over-taken by a *ſwift deſtruction*; that thoſe, who are ſo vigilant to ſpread damning hereſies, ſhould find that their own *damnation ſlumbreth not.*

THE inſpir'd penmen of holy writ, of whom it cannot be doubted, but that they ſpoke and wrote in the ſpirit of meekneſs, are remarkably ſevere, whenever they have occaſion to touch upon this ſubject. There is a peculiar ſharpneſs of language, and acrimony of ſtyle obſervable in their writings, when they animadvert upon ſeducers: they, who upon all other occaſions breath nothing but peace, love, gentleneſs, goodneſs, meekneſs, are yet very bitter in their invectives, and not at all ſparing in their cenſures, when they caution their diſciples againſt being miſled by ſuch peſtilent deceivers.

SAINT *Paul* in his Epiſtle to the *Romans* upon the mention of ſome, who had either themſelves falſly affirm'd, or falſly accus'd the Apoſtle of affirming, *that evil might be done for a good end*, a doctrine not peculiar to the *Romaniſts* of that age, doubts not peremptorily to pronounce of ſuch men, that *their damnation is juſt.* The ſame St. *Paul*, when *Elymas* the ſorcerer ſought to turn away the Deputy from the faith, addreſs'd himſelf to him in ſuch words, as expreſs great warmth of zeal, and heat of indignation; and yet he is declar'd to have been *fill'd with the Holy Ghoſt, when ſetting his eyes upon him, he ſaid, O full of all ſubtilty, and all miſchief, thou child of the Devil, thou enemy of all righteouſneſs, wilt thou not ceaſe to pervert the right ways of the Lord?* The ſame Apoſtle is not afraid to pronounce an anathema, and, to add the greater weight to it, to reiterate it againſt even *an angel from heaven*, if he ſhould go about to corrupt the purity of the Goſpel: *There be ſome,* ſaith he, *that trouble you, and would pervert the Goſpel of Chriſt. But tho' we or an angel from heaven, preach any other Goſpel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accurſed. As we ſaid before, ſo ſay I now again, if any one preach any other Goſpel unto you, than that ye have receiv'd, let him be accurſed.* Every Epiſtle of St. *Paul* abounds with ſuch ſevere reproofs, as I have here given you a ſpecimen of, againſt ſeducers; reproofs, which carry with them ſuch an edge of ſatyr, that did not the heinouſneſs of the ſin juſtifie the ſharpneſs of the reproof, the Apoſtle would ſeem to have overlook'd that precept, which he gives to others, that they ſhould *put away from them all bitterneſs, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-ſpeaking.*

Rom. 3. 8.

Acts 13. 9, 10.

Gal. 1. 7, 8, 9.

Epheſ. 4. 31.

THE bleſſed Jeſus himſelf, who bids us to *learn of him, becauſe he is meek, and lowly of heart*; who came into the world, not to curſe but to bleſs; and who accordingly enter'd upon his prophetical office by preaching beatitudes, doth, notwithſtanding, with great plainneſs and freedom of ſpeech, with a more than ordinary vehemence of ſpirit, and ſharpneſs of language, denounce repeated woes againſt thoſe *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, who *made the commandment of God of none effect* thro' their falſe gloſſes; who by their pernicious doctrines *ſhut up the kingdom of heaven, neither going in themſelves, nor ſuffering them that would enter, to go in*; who *compaſs'd ſea and land to make proſelytes, and when they were made, made them twofold more the children of hell than themſelves*: theſe he again and again ſtyles *hypocrites, blind guides, ſerpents,*

Matt. 15. 6.
c. 23. 13.

v. 15.

pents, a generation of vipers; and of theſe he declares, that *they ſhall not eſcape the damnation of hell.*

I AM ſenſible how ill it becomes the miniſters of the Goſpel, to be over-liberal in pronouncing againſt any ſort of men the dreadful ſentence of damnation: as the very ſound of it carries with it amazement and terrour; ſo we ought never to utter it without fear and trembling: as it becomes none but madmen to throw about *firebrands, arrows and death*; ſo is it proper for none but wild enthuſiaſts to thunder out hell and damnation. By being too free in ſuch cenſures we render them familiar and cheap, and bring them into contempt; and I know of no privilege we have to curſe people more than others; or, why we ſhould not be thought to curſe, if we ſhould declare men accurs'd of God, out of levity, or paſſion. But whilſt we guide our ſelves by the infallible rule of God's Word; whilſt we paſs no other ſentence than God himſelf hath paſs'd; whilſt we apply this ſentence, not to perſons but things; whilſt we warn men of their ſin and danger, not with a deſign to upbraid or inſult them, but with an honeſt intention of reſcuing them; we may, without breach of Chriſtian charity, without tranſgreſſing the bounds of moderation, pronounce, nay, we cannot without uncharitableneſs, without betraying our truſt, but pronounce, thoſe menaces which have gone forth from the throne of the Almighty againſt *falſe teachers*.

IN theſe divine menaces thoſe men are moſt deeply concern'd, who make it their ſtudy and buſineſs to infect unſettled minds with ſuch peſtilent principles, as at once overthrow all Religion and morality; who venture boldly to affirm, and expect that the boldneſs of their aſſertions ſhould be taken for a ſufficient proof, that the notions of Religion were at firſt ſtarted by crafty and deſigning men, in order to keep the ignorant and credulous in awe; that the world was made by chance, that all things in it happen by chance, and that it is to no purpoſe for any one to live by rule; that after death there is nothing, and that death it ſelf is to be look'd upon as nothing; that the hopes of heaven have no other foundation than the pride of ſome ambitious zealots, who promiſe themſelves crowns and ſceptres there; and that the fears of hell are fit only for thoſe ſlaviſh ſouls to entertain, who having been ſcar'd with the ſtories of ſpirits and fiends whilſt they were children, have never been able to recover their wits ſince; in ſhort, that good and evil are arbitrary diſtinctions; that they differ not in the things themſelves, but in the ſentiments of thoſe who ſpeak of them; that what is eſteem'd good in ſome places, or at ſome times, or by ſome perſons, is in other places, or at other times, or by other perſons, reputed indifferent, or perhaps evil; and that it would be fooliſh to confine our ſelves to one ſort of actions, which ſome few perſons have agreed to call good, ſince others, as wiſe as they, find no ſuch inherent goodneſs in them; or to refrain from another ſort of actions, which they, who have now loſt the reliſh which they once had of them, or who perhaps have a mind to engroſs them to themſelves, have thought fit to fright others from, by giving them the name of ſinful and damnable. That ſuch principles as theſe have been, not only whiſper'd in private, but talk'd openly in publick places of reſort; that ſuch pernicious doctrines have been embrac'd, profeſs'd, and propagated amongſt us; that they have been every where ſpread abroad without reſerve, conſign'd to writing, and deliver'd down in books, for the poiſoning of ſucceeding ages as well as of the preſent, is the grief of all good men, and the triumph of libertines: that the teaching,

ing, ſcattering, and abetting of ſuch atheiſtical principles hath a direct tendency to the deſtruction of ſouls, is as certain, as that we have ſouls capable of eternal happineſs, and liable to eternal perdition.

But altho' the menaces denounc'd againſt ſeducers do principally concern ſuch as ſet up for gaining proſelytes to atheiſm; yet do they alſo reach all teachers of falſe and wicked principles, of what kind ſoever. Whatever doctrine ſlackens the obligation of God's laws, whether it miſrepreſents the laws themſelves by repreſenting good actions as not at all good, or not ſo neceſſary as they really are; or by repreſenting evil actions as not at all ſinful, or leſs ſinful as to their degree, than they truly are; or whether it weakens the motives to obedience, by repreſenting the glories of heaven as not attainable, or not worth our attaining, or not ſo great as the Scriptures declare them to be; or by repreſenting the torments of hell as imaginary, or as leſs grievous, or as leſs durable, than the Holy Spirit hath in the Goſpel taught us they are; ſuch doctrine, wherever it is receiv'd, hath a fatal efficacy towards the corruption of manners; and all who teach ſuch pernicious doctrines, do the Devil's proper work in deſtroying men's ſouls; and are to be rank'd amongſt the *partakers of other men's ſins*, as having not only a ſhare, but the moſt principal ſhare, in the guilt of thoſe ſins, into which they lead others by their ungodly and wicked principles.

A Second Way of *partaking in other men's ſins* is by giving them evil counſels.

Under evil counſels I comprehend all thoſe methods, which men make uſe of to perſwade others to ſin, without endeavouring to repreſent the ſinful action they perſwade them to as innocent: for thoſe, who go about to corrupt others by making that appear to be indifferent, which God hath pronounc'd to be ſinful, properly fall under the former claſs of *evil teachers*. But when the ſinfulneſs of an action is own'd, or at leaſt not denied; when we perſwade men to do what in their opinion is unlawful, without endeavouring to alter their opinion about it; when we diſſemble the ſinfulneſs of an action and diſplay the pleaſure that attends it, or the profit that will accrue from it; when by promiſes, or by threats; by command, or by entreaty; by force, or by inſinuation, we prevail with men to do what their conſciences diſapprove, we are then guilty of *partaking in their ſins*, and of deſtroying their ſouls by *our evil counſels*. It was by this method that ſin firſt came into the world; evil counſel was the firſt engine, which was employ'd by the Tempter. It was acknowledg'd on all hands, that God had ſaid, *thou ſhalt not eat of the tree, that is in the midſt of the garden*; but the Serpent, by ſhewing the woman that the *tree was good for food, and that it was pleaſant to the eyes, and a tree to be deſir'd to make one wiſe, beguil'd* the woman, and *ſhe did eat*; and the ſame bait, which ſhe had been caught with, ſhe us'd with the ſame ſucceſs for the engaging her huſband: ſo that, by the ſuggeſtion of theſe two evil counſellors, guilt and puniſhment, ſin and death, were deriv'd upon the whole race of mankind. Gen. 3

And as ſin was firſt brought into the world by evil counſel, ſo hath it ever ſince thriven well by the ſame means. Some perſons are by the benefit of a vertuous and religious education unacquainted with ſin; there are ſeveral kinds of vices, which they are wholly ſtrangers to; and to theſe perſons evil adviſers are pernicious by ſuggeſting to them the commiſſion of ſuch ſins, as would otherwiſe never have come into their

thoughts.

thoughts. Some there are of an eaſie, ſoft, and pliable temper; willing to pleaſe every one, and careful to give no offence; and to ſuch as theſe evil counſels are fatal; becauſe thoſe ſinful actions, which of themſelves they have no inclination to, or which perhaps they are averſe from, they had yet rather give way to, than incur the diſpleaſure of thoſe, whom by want of compliance they might diſoblige. Some there are, who are naturally timorous and diffident; willing they are to taſte the pleaſures of ſin, but they have not courage enough to venture upon it; and to theſe evil counſels are deſtructive, as they embolden them to the doing of that by inſtigation and encouragement, which of themſelves they durſt not attempt. Some would be willing to ſin, if they could tell how to do it with convenience and privacy; and evil counſellors finiſh the ruin of theſe men, by furniſhing them with proper opportunities of ſinning. Pleaſure hath its charms, which are not eaſie to be reſiſted by the young; and profit hath its attractives, whereby it prevails upon the old: ſo that the former will be led away by the evil counſels of thoſe, who repreſent the ways of ſin to be ways of pleaſantneſs; and the latter will be ſeduc'd by the advices of ſuch, whoſe maxim it is, that *godlineſs* ſhould always give place to *gain*. Now, if wicked counſels are on ſo many accounts dangerous; if they have ſo many ways of depraving men's manners; if the unexperienc'd ſinner is inſtructed by them, the good-natur'd miſled, the timorous hardned; if men of all ages, all complexions, all tempers, are apt to be perverted by them; then may thoſe, who employ them to theſe ſinful purpoſes, be juſtly charg'd with being coadjutors to Satan in compaſſing the deſtruction of ſouls, and co-partners with him in thoſe ſins, which other men commit thro' their inſtigation.

How heinous, how exorbitant, how intolerable this guilt of drawing others into ſin by evil counſel is in God's ſight, we may judge by the ſeverity of that law, which he was pleas'd to ordain againſt thoſe, who allur'd their brethren from the ſervice of God to idolatrous worſhip. (Deut. 13. 6, 8, 9, 10.) *If thy brother the ſon of thy mother, or thy ſon, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy boſom, or thy friend which is as thine own ſoul, entice thee ſecretly, ſaying, Let us go, and ſerve other Gods, Thou ſhalt not conſent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither ſhall thine eye pity him, neither ſhalt thou ſpare, neither ſhalt thou conceal him. But thou ſhalt ſurely kill him; thine hand ſhall be firſt upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hands of all the people: and thou ſhalt ſtone him with ſtones that he die; becauſe he hath ſought to thruſt thee away from the Lord thy God.* The enticement of others to idolatry was, it ſeems, ſo abominable a ſin, that he who was guilty of it, loſt all title to pity and compaſſion; it looſen'd at once all the ties of blood, relation, and friendſhip. How cloſe and intimate ſoever the union was betwixt the enticer and the perſon on whom ſuch an attempt was made; tho' they were of the ſame blood; tho' they were but one fleſh; yea, tho' they were but one ſoul; upon the ſuggeſtion of ſuch evil counſel that union was immediately diſſolv'd: the parent muſt bear teſtimony againſt his child, the huſband againſt his wife, the friend againſt him who was as his own ſoul; becauſe none of theſe relations could make the party ſo dear, as the wicked counſel he gave rendred him odious: it was hard enough for perſons ſo nearly related to inform againſt their relations; but this was not ſufficient, unleſs they were alſo his executioners. It may not be pretended, that it is as great a crime to allure perſons to

other

other ſins, as to idolatry: but ſince men's ſouls may as effectually be deſtroy'd by the habitual practice of any heinous ſin, as by idolatry it ſelf; ſince all deadly ſin hath in it ſomething of the nature of idolatry, as it draws us from the love of God to the love of the creature; thoſe who by evil counſels allure unwary perſons to the commiſſion of any enormous ſin, are to be look'd upon as ſeducers; and tho' the perſons miſled by them have no commiſſion to revenge the wrong done to their ſouls upon ſuch pernicious counſellors, yet without repentance it will certainly be recompens'd upon them by him, *to whom vengeance belongeth*, and who will be true to his word in *repaying* it.

A THIRD way of being *partakers in other men's ſins*, is by giving them evil example.

MEN ſpeak to each other by their actions, as well as by their words: there is a kind of language in what we do in the ſight of each other, as well as in what we ſpeak in the hearing of each other. As it is in the power of wicked men to tempt others to ſin, and to be partakers of the ſin of others, by pernicious counſel; ſo alſo is it in their power, and too often in their will, to pollute others by the infection of a bad example. And this infection is like to ſpread the farther, and to prove the more fatal, becauſe the generality of men are apt to be govern'd, not ſo much by rule or by counſel, as by authority and example. Many perſons act as if they had no reaſon, no judgment, no conſcience of their own, but were altogether guided and ſway'd by the actions of other men: what they ſee others do, that they do as it were mechanically: all their motions depend upon the motions of thoſe by whom they are influenc'd: they ſeem to be animated by another's ſoul; and what they obſerve that perſon do, whom they have made their guide and leader, that they by a ſecret and ſcarcely reſiſtible force find themſelves diſpos'd to follow. There is the ſame agreement and correſpondency between their actions and the actions of thoſe whom they imitate, as was in the prophet *Ezekiel*'s viſion betwixt the movements of the wheels and the living creatures; *when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them, and when the living creatures were lift up from the earth, the wheels were lift up. ---When thoſe went, theſe went; and when thoſe ſtood, theſe ſtood: for the ſpirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.* Thus forcibly, I ſay, are many men led by the examples of others: they trouble not themſelves to enquire, whether what they do is lawful, or unlawful; it is ſufficient to them that they are not ſingular, but do the ſame thing which others do as well as they. Men learn to live and act, as much as they do to ſpeak or write, by imitation; and whatever defects there are in the original, the ſame and more will be ſure to appear in the copy.

NOW if human nature is ſuch a perfect mimick; if moſt are apt to be ſway'd rather by example than by rule; if example hath in it ſuch a contagious influence, it is plain that all who ſet ill examples, are anſwerable, not only for their own perſonal ſins, but alſo for thoſe ſins which others commit by their example. Actions in themſelves indifferent become ſins, when by giving ſcandal they lead others to commit ſin. Hence it is, that the Apoſtles do ſo often, and ſo largely inſiſt upon the ſtrict obligation which all Chriſtians are under, to abridge their chriſtian liberty in the uſe of things otherwiſe lawful, for fear of offending, or ſcandalizing their brethren: *Take heed*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *leſt by any means this liberty of yours become a ſtumbling-block to them that are weak.* 1 Cor. 8. 9, 10, 11, 12.

weak. For if any man ſee thee, which haſt knowledge, ſit at meat in the idol's temple, ſhall not the conſcience of him that is weak be emboldned to eat thoſe things which are offer'd to idols? And thro' thy knowledge ſhall the weak brother periſh, for whom Chriſt died? But when ye ſin ſo againſt the brethren, and wound their weak conſcience, ye ſin againſt Chriſt. Now if thoſe, who do things in themſelves innocent, are ſaid to lay a ſtumbling-block in the way of thoſe, who thro' weakneſs may take an occaſion from thence to do things forbidden; if they are accus'd of *deſtroying their brethren, for whom Chriſt died*, of *ſinning againſt their brethren*, of *wounding their conſciences*, of *ſinning againſt Chriſt* ---- How much more deſervedly may this accuſation be brought againſt thoſe, who lay ſtumbling-blocks in the ways of others, by doing actions notoriouſly and confeſſedly ſinful? Actions, not only in appearance, but in reality evil? Actions, that will appear evil, not only to ſome, but to all who obſerve them? Actions that would in themſelves be damnable, tho' they gave no ſcandal, and are worthy of an heavier judgment, becauſe they give great ſcandal, and betray others into ſin and damnation?

A FOURTH way of *partaking of other men's ſins*, is by with-holding from them that neceſſary inſtruction, which, by the relation we bear to them, we are oblig'd to give them.

GOD, when he publiſh'd his laws to the people of *Iſrael*, charg'd
Deut. 4. 9, &c. them, not only to *take heed to themſelves, and to keep their own ſouls diligently*, but alſo to *teach them their ſons, and their ſons ſons.* And in the Goſpel we are taught, that it is the indiſpenſable duty of parents to
Epheſ. 6. 4. *bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* Thoſe parents therefore who rob their children of this neceſſary inſtruction, which is entail'd upon them by the law of God, and of which they cannot be diſinherited without the greateſt injury to their ſouls, will be reſponſible for thoſe ſins of their children, which they commit for want of ſuch inſtruction. It hath always juſtly been accounted an inſtance of the greateſt barbarity for parents to deny their children that food, which is neceſſary for the nouriſhment and ſupport of their
Iſai. 49. 15. bodies. *Can a woman forget her ſucking-child, that ſhe ſhould not have*
Lam. 4. 3, 4. *compaſſion on the ſon of her womb? Even the ſea-monſters draw out their breaſts, they give ſuck to their young ones: The daughter of my people is become cruel; the tongue of the ſucking-child cleaveth unto the roof of the mouth for thirſt; the young children lack bread, and no man breaketh it to them.* Now, is the want of bodily food thus lamentable? Is the neglect of ſupplying it thus inhuman? Muſt thoſe parents be deſtitute of all bowels, who are deaf to the cries of their children, famiſhing for lack of their bodily ſuſtenance? And is the want of ſpiritual food an evil leſs calamitous, or the with-holding of it a cruelty leſs odious?
1 Tim. 5. 8. *If any provide not for his own, and eſpecially for thoſe of his own houſe, he,* in the judgment of St. *Paul, hath denied the faith, and is worſe than an infidel.* And if Chriſtians are oblig'd to ſupply the temporal wants of their domeſticks under the pain of forfeiting their title to Chriſtianity, then ought thoſe, who take no care to relieve their ſpiritual wants, to look upon themſelves as even worſe than thoſe, who, in the opinion of the Apoſtle, *are worſe than infidels.*

THIS cenſure ought to be ſeriouſly conſider'd both by parents, and by thoſe who are in the place of parents, and who have "bound them-"ſelves by ſolemn vows in the preſence of God and his Church, to inſtruct "thoſe

"thoſe, for whom they are ſureties, in all thoſe things, which a Chriſtian "ought to know and to believe to his ſoul's health; and take care that they "be brought up to lead a godly and a Chriſtian life". Every ſuch perſon doth, by the very nature of the engagement into which he enters, ſay unto God what *Judah* ſaid unto *Iſrael* his father, *I will be ſurety for the child, of my hand ſhalt thou require him*; *if I bring him not unto thee, and ſet him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever.* Gen. 43. 9. That they may not bear this blame, that they may not incur the diſpleaſure of their heavenly Father, it is their duty to uſe their beſt endeavours, as *Judah* did, that no miſchief do befal them, for whom they became ſureties; this is a debt, which they have bound upon their conſciences by the ſtrongeſt ties, and which if they do not diſcharge, they muſt expect to be impleaded at God's tribunal by thoſe angels, who are peculiarly concern'd for theſe *little ones*.

It might look partial, if in enumerating the ſeveral ways of *partaking in other men's ſins*, and in ſpecifying that particular way of communicating in the ſins of others, by with-holding from them that neceſſary inſtruction, which they of right challenge from us, I ſhould take no notice of the ſtrict obligation which the miniſters of the Goſpel are under to feed their reſpective flocks, and their guilt, if they are unfaithful in the diſcharge of their miniſterial duties. What God declar'd to the prophet *Ezekiel*, is applicable to all, who by any ties are bound to watch over the ſouls of others. *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the houſe of Iſrael*; *therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I ſay unto the wicked, thou ſhalt ſurely die, and thou giveſt him not warning, nor ſpeakeſt to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to ſave his life*; *the ſame wicked man ſhall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteouſneſs, and commit iniquity, he ſhall die*; *becauſe thou haſt not given him warning, he ſhall die in his ſin ---- but his blood will I require at thine hand.* Ezek. 3. 17, 18, &c.

That this may neither be your caſe, nor mine; that neither you may ſuffer for want of taking, nor I for want of giving, neceſſary warning, I do now, my dearly beloved brethren, moſt earneſtly beſeech you to call to remembrance all thoſe diſſuaſives from impiety and ſin, all thoſe exhortations to holineſs and virtue, which I have, thro' the courſe of my miniſtry, with much weakneſs and infirmity, but with an honeſt mind, and an hearty concern for your eternal welfare, made unto you. I beg of you for my ſake, for your ſakes, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, in whoſe name, and by whoſe authority I have ſpoken unto you, that having by your own free choice ſet me to be your watchman, you would hearken to this the laſt voice of the trumpet, which I ſhall ſound under that character; you would take this the laſt warning, which I am to give you in that relation and capacity ---- the Word, which I have heard at God's mouth, you have often heard at mine; and I do now once more declare it unto you: namely, that *if ſinners do not turn from their evil ways, they ſhall* ſurely *die in their iniquities*; *the ſword of God's vengeance ſhall come upon them, and their blood ſhall be upon their head*; *but* that *if* even now *they return from their ſins, and* hence-forwards *do that which is lawful and right, they ſhall ſurely live, they ſhall not die.* Let this plain, this repeated, this final declaration of one, who ſincerely loves and regards you, and who hath had all the teſtimonies he could wiſh, more than he could expect, of affection and eſteem from you,

you, ſink deep into your hearts, and have the deſir'd influence upon your lives. To the many and ſignal proofs you have ſhewn of your good will towards me, add the moſt valuable, the moſt acceptable, the moſt proper pledge of your love to me, that of permitting me to be an inſtrument, under God, of your everlaſting ſalvation.

Oh, how happy would it be both for you and for me, if, when I come to render an account of my miniſtry to Chriſt my Lord and Maſter, I could do it in the ſame words, in which he gave unto his Father an account of the diſcharge of his mediatorial office! *I have glorified thee on the earth*; *I have finiſhed the work, which thou gaveſt me to do. I have manifeſted thy name unto the men which thou gaveſt me out of the world*--- *I have given unto them the words, which thou gaveſt unto me, and they have receiv'd them.* --- *All mine are thine*; *thoſe that thou gaveſt me have I kept, and none of them is loſt.* --- May God in his infinite mercy pardon my defects in preaching his word, and yours in hearing it! May the ſeed which hath been ſown, and that which ſhall be ſown, take deep root downwards, and bring forth abundant fruit upwards! May thoſe who ſhall follow me, be as faithful and able ſtewards of the myſteries of God, as thoſe who have gone before me! May the ſame kind reception and encouragement, which my miniſtry hath found among you, be transferr'd, together with the duty and burden of it, to him who ſhall ſucceed me! May the ſame unanimity amongſt your ſelves, the ſame love of one another, the ſame affection to your prince and country, the ſame reverence for our excellent Church and its orthodox miniſters, for which you have been hitherto celebrated, be ſtill preſerv'd, be ſtill conſpicuous amongſt you! John 17. 4, &c.

And, *now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are ſanctified.* Acts 20. 23.

----- Of which inheritance, *&c.*

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SERMON LII.

The Danger of delaying Repentance.

HEB. III. 7. and part of the 8th.

Wherefore as the Holy Ghoſt ſaith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

WHAT the Holy Ghoſt here ſaith, he at firſt ſpoke to the people of *Iſrael*; but the Apoſtle has in this and in the following chapter brought home the exhortation to us. They to whom theſe words were firſt addreſs'd, were deaf to this call, and periſh'd by reaſon of their diſobedience: God *was griev'd with that generation, and ſaid, They do always err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways*; *ſo I ſware in my wrath, they ſhall not enter into my reſt.* We are warn'd by their example not to neglect this call, which ſummons us now, as it did them heretofore, to an immediate converſion to God; leſt by an affected delay our hearts be hardned as theirs was, and God in his wrath ſeclude us, as he did them, from entring into his reſt. *Take heed brethren*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*; *but exhort one another daily, whilſt it is call'd to day, leſt any of you be hardned thro' the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* That we might not forget this neceſſary caution; that this exhortation might be, as the Apoſtle directs it ſhould, repeated day after day, our Church hath taken care, that theſe words ſhould ſound daily in our ears, by making them part of our conſtant morning ſervice. As often as we repeat, or hear this part of our daily prayers; ſo often are we call'd upon by the Holy Ghoſt to repent forthwith of our ſins, and to turn immediately unto God. As many times as we have heard this call, and have not obey'd it, but have put off the duty of repentance to another day; ſo often have we griev'd the Spirit of God, and provok'd him to deſert us. The Holy Ghoſt calls upon us to hear God's voice to day, and our anſwer is, that either we will never hearken to his voice, or that we will not hearken to it till to morrow. When the ſame voice of God re-

Pſal. 95. 7, 8, &c.

Hebr. 3. 10, 11.

v. 12, 13.

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reſounds to us on the morrow, we defer hearkning to it till the next day, and ſo onward, 'till at laſt we are ſurpriz'd by ſudden death, and are ſnatch'd away without having leiſure ſo much as to call upon God for the pardon of our ſins; or elſe are ſeiz'd by ſickneſs, which leaves us an opportunity of begging God's pardon, but, by putting a period to our lives, gives us no opportunity of diſcerning the ſincerity of our repentance by the change of our former ſinful practices: ſo that our condition becomes either quite deſperate, as in the former caſe; or extremely hazardous and deſtitute of all rational comfort, as in the latter.

THE miſchiefs of thus deferring our repentance from day to day, and year to year, and of our thinking it then time enough to apply our ſelves to it when death approaches, have been very often, and in very lively colours, repreſented to impenitent ſinners: and I am not ſo vain as to think that I can offer any thing upon this ſubject, which hath not been already ſaid, and ſaid in a better manner. But as thoſe, who have gone before us upon this argument, did not decline treating of it, tho' others had handled it very fully and ſolidly long before them, becauſe men continuing ſtill obſtinate in their ſins, and in procraſtinating their repentance, it was neceſſary that the ſame repreſentations of their danger ſhould be made to them, as had been made to their predeceſſors in ſin and in impenitence; ſo ſince, to the great grief of our ſouls, we do daily find, that after all that hath been ſaid upon this ſerious and important ſubject, men do go on ſtill to defer the thoughts of living well, till they are under the apprehenſions that they ſhall live no longer, there lies a neceſſity upon us to ſay again what hath been ſo often ſaid, and to preach thoſe obvious, familiar, known truths, which do not want to be now firſt diſcover'd, or to be elaborately prov'd, or to be adorn'd with the beauties of eloquence, but to be retriev'd from oblivion, to be again and again inculcated, and to be laid before men with all plainneſs and ſimplicity of ſpeech, as being of themſelves weighty enough, if duly attended to, to work upon them, without the help of art, or language, or order, or any of the uſual methods of perſwaſion.

NOW, in order to ſhew the extreme danger and folly of deferring our repentance from time to time, it is not neceſſary that we ſhould prove, that a late repentance, in the laſt moment of our lives, is in all caſes inſufficient for procuring God's pardon; it is enough to prove, that it may not at all times avail with God for the obtaining the remiſſion of our ſins. Some very learned and very pious perſons have maintain'd, that the ſorrow of dying ſinners, who have liv'd wicked lives, and who are now paſt mending them, cannot in any caſe be true ſaving repentance; that the promiſes in Scripture made to repentance, without actual amendment of life, are made only to baptiſmal repentance; that no baptiz'd perſons can be ſav'd without actual holineſs of life, and that therefore to perſwade our ſelves or others, that ſorrow for ſins, and reſolutions of a new life, will at any time be accepted inſtead of the obedience and holineſs of our lives, is to make void the whole Goſpel of our Saviour. Theſe doctrines are ſo uncomfortable, and conclude ſo many ſouls under everlaſting damnation, that in mere compaſſion and charity to millions of Chriſtians whoſe caſe this is, we are tempted to wiſh theſe opinions to be as ill-grounded as they are ſevere; but yet, if we go to examine them by the Word of God, we ſhall perhaps find it very difficult to work our ſelves up to a clear, full, and entire perſwaſion that they are abſolutely falſe. And would no ſinners truſt to a late repentance, but thoſe who can anſwer all the arguments that are brought to prove the abſolute invalidity of ſuch a repentance, there would be very few who would venture all their hopes of forgiveneſs upon this bottom. I am indeed in my own mind verily perſwaded, that, notwithſtanding all that hath been advanc'd againſt the utter invalidity of ſuch a repentance, we have not ſufficient authority to pronounce the condition of all ſuch late penitents to be quite hopeleſs; and yet I muſt at the ſame time ingenuouſly confeſs, that I am not well able to aſſign any convincing, irrefragable, ſatisfactory reaſons for this charitable perſwaſion. I find that even thoſe who are moſt rigid towards dying penitents, are willing to allow, that tho' there are no hopes for them according to the terms of the Goſpel, yet God may poſſibly ſave them by a ſovereign and prerogative grace; that tho' we can expect and rely on no other grace but what God hath promis'd in his Goſpel, yet God doth not abſolutely confine himſelf, nor muſt we confine his grace. But I am afraid that this diſtinction between God's covenanted and uncovenanted grace will afford no ſolid comfort, no degree of conſolation, to dying penitents: for if the arguments brought againſt the inſufficiency of a death-bed repentance prove the point which they are brought for, they do not only conclude that, according to the doctrine of the Goſpel, ſuch a repentance cannot be ſhewn to be effectual, but that it may be ſhewn to be ineffectual. We are, for inſtance, taught in the Goſpel, that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee God*; Hebr. 12. 14. it is from hence inferr'd, that, according to the Goſpel covenant, none who live not to *bring forth fruits of repentance*, can have any hopes of ſeeing God, becauſe they are deſtitute of holineſs of life: but now, if by God's ſovereign or prerogative grace ſuch as theſe ſhall however be admitted to the viſion of God, then they are ſav'd, not only by an uncovenanted grace, but alſo in direct contradiction to the covenant.

Now tho' I doubt not but the diſtinction between promis'd and unpromis'd grace is very good, when it is rightly applied; yet I am afraid, that to intimate that any ſinners, whom the covenant doth exclude from ſalvation, may be ſav'd by another rule, which is not only beſide but againſt the tenor of the covenant, is a doctrine which would be attended with very fatal conſequences, and which therefore 'tis very dangerous to advance. When we entertain any hopes of the heathen, we are us'd to ground theſe hopes upon the uncovenanted mercies of God: we have no expreſs promiſe in Scripture that they ſhall be ſav'd, the promiſes being made only to believers; we have no poſitive declaration that they ſhall be damn'd, the threats againſt unbelievers being ſuppos'd to extend only to thoſe who have the means of faith: we therefore think that their future ſtate is left undetermin'd in holy Writ; and therefore when we allow it poſſible for them to be partakers of eternal happineſs, we have recourſe to unpromis'd and uncovenanted grace. But now were it expreſly reveal'd in the Word of God, that none ſhould be ſav'd but thoſe to whom the name of Chriſt is made known; that all who do not believe in him, whether their unbelief proceed from obſtinacy, or from unavoidable ignorance, whether they have ever heard of Chriſt or not, ſhould periſh everlaſtingly; we ſhould not then fancy that the heathens might be ſav'd by a ſovereign prerogative grace; or if we ſhould advance ſuch an opinion, we ſhould plainly call in queſtion the truth of the Goſpel.

Now if the arguments which are generally inſiſted on to prove the repentance of dying perſons abſolutely uſeleſs and ineffectual, are ſtrong and cogent; if, becauſe we are taught that *God will render to every man according to his deeds*, we are thereby inſtructed that thoſe who have liv'd wicked lives will be condemn'd to everlaſting miſery, whatever vows or reſolutions of obedience they may make when they come to dye, ſince they ſhall be judg'd, not according to the manner of their deaths, but according to the manner of their lives; if, becauſe it is ſaid by the Apoſtle that *the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God*, Gal. 5. 21. it univerſally and unavoidably follows, that thoſe who before they dye repent of their unrighteouſneſs, but do not live to perform the acts of righteouſneſs, ſhall be excluded from heaven, ſince they are, notwithſtanding ſuch their repentance, ſtill to be numbred among the unrighteous; then to affirm that ſuch penitents may be ſav'd by an unpromis'd and uncovenanted grace, is to aſſert that thoſe may be ſav'd, whom the Goſpel hath concluded under condemnation. So that, I think, there is no room for this reſerve of ſovereign or prerogative grace; but we muſt either allow, that thoſe precepts which require an holy life as the neceſſary condition of everlaſting happineſs, are to be underſtood with ſome reſtriction, ſo that it may be poſſible for ſome to be ſav'd by a ſincere repentance, tho' they do not live to bring forth the fruits of it; or if they admit of no exception in any caſe whatſoever, we muſt then openly and plainly declare, that thoſe who have liv'd wicked lives, and who dye before they can exerciſe thoſe Chriſtian virtues and graces, which alone can denominate them holy, ſober, and righteous, ſhall, notwithſtanding all the ſigns they can give of an unſeign'd repentance, be certainly and irrecoverably loſt to all eternity. According to the terms of the Goſpel they cannot, ſay theſe men, be ſav'd; but they ſhould ſay, if they would ſpeak out, that, according to the terms of the Goſpel, they will certainly be damn'd: there is no refuge therefore for them in uncovenanted grace, becauſe God will not, by virtue of any ſuppos'd prerogative, diſpenſe with his own laws, and ſave thoſe whom Chriſt in his Goſpel hath peremptorily threatned to condemn.

But is not this, you'll ſay, to render the caſe of late penitents more deſperate, than even thoſe divines repreſent it, who are the moſt ſevere and rigorous? For they allow the ſalvation of ſuch perſons poſſible, tho' not by the ordinary grace of the Goſpel, yet by an extraordinary grace no where promis'd in the Goſpel; but you ſeem to take away even this ſlender foundation of their hope. We do indeed think this diſtinction wrongly applied to the caſe before us, and if we have endeavour'd to ſhew the miſapplication of it, 'tis not becauſe we would weaken the hopes of late penitents, but becauſe we would ſhew that thoſe who have been forc'd to fly to this diſtinction, have to all intents and purpoſes repreſented their caſe to be quite deſperate, which was more than poſſibly they intended to do, and more than they would be willing directly and expreſly to do; and therefore would, we believe, rather diſclaim the principles they go upon, than admit of ſo harſh and ſevere a doctrine, as doth neceſſarily reſult from them. They do allow, that thoſe texts of Scripture which ſeem to make an univerſal obedience the ſole condition of everlaſting happineſs, do admit of ſome limitations; they do grant that baptiz'd infants who dye before they can perform actual holineſs, may be ſav'd, tho' it is ſaid by Chriſt, without exception, that Matt. 7, 21. *none ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will*

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of his Father which is in heaven: they do acknowledge that adult perſons, who have liv'd very wicked lives before they embrace the faith of Chriſt, and who, upon their embracing it, reſolve to live better for the future, and upon ſuch their reſolutions are baptiz'd, ſhall have all their ſins waſh'd away in baptiſm, and ſhall be *heirs of ſalvation*, tho' they do not live long enough after baptiſm to *bring forth the fruits of repentance* in an holy life; and yet there is no expreſs reſerve for theſe in thoſe general aſſertions, that God *will give to every man according as his work ſhall be*. Rev. 11. 12. They would not, I believe, deny but that perſons, who enter upon firm reſolutions of obedience, whilſt they are in the vigor of health, and under no apprehenſions of death, are in a ſalvable ſtate, tho' they ſhould unexpectedly dye before they have time to ſhew the ſincerity of their reſolutions by an actual reformation; and yet the caſe of theſe is not expreſsly reſerv'd in thoſe precepts, upon which they build the indiſpenſable neceſſity of actual holineſs and habits of virtue, in order to obtain everlaſting life. Theſe and other exceptions they muſt admit to thoſe general precepts and rules, which make actual obedience to the laws of God the Goſpel-condition of eternal happineſs; and therefore the repentance of late penitents cannot be prov'd to be unavailable to pardon, merely upon this account, becauſe in thoſe univerſal aphoriſms there is no expreſs exception made for the particular caſe of a late and death-bed repentance.

All that hath been hitherto offer'd tends only to prove, that it ſeems barely poſſible, that ſuch a repentance as dying perſons are able to perform, may in ſome caſes be accepted of God: that it will always be accepted, or that it will often prove available to procure the pardon of ſins; or that it can ever be ſafely relied upon, or afford any ſound comfort to thoſe who have nothing elſe to truſt to, is more than, I think, can be prov'd, more than what I would be thought to advance. That opinion ſeems to me, as moſt charitable, ſo alſo moſt conſonant to the gracious promiſes of the Goſpel, and, if not abus'd by evil men, in it ſelf no ways prejudicial to the intereſts of virtue and piety, which teaches that wherever there is an effectually willing mind, and nothing but an opportunity is wanting to a practice conformable thereto; where there is ſuch a change of mind, as would produce a like change of actions, if there was time allow'd for it, there God, *who ſearcheth the hearts and reins*, and who knows the moſt inmoſt thoughts of men, will, in his infinite mercy, and in regard to the merits of our crucified Saviour, take the will for the deed, and accept dying penitents according to that ſincere unfeign'd deſire of amendment of life, which they have, and not according to that outward actual obedience, which, thro' ſome accidents to them unavoidable, they have not: that when theſe reſolutions are ſincere, God alone can judge; that they are moſt frequently unſincere, ſuch as would be broken if they came to be tried, and therefore of no worth or value when untried; but that it is poſſible they may ſometimes be ſincere, and ſuch as would be proof againſt all temptations if tried, and that then they are available to the pardon of ſins; that therefore the caſe of dying penitents is not to be pronounc'd abſolutely deſperate, but only extremely hazardous; and that whenever they do eſcape the wrath of God, they are as it were pull'd out of the very fire. For as general as the promiſes of pardon are to all who aſk it, yet it is evident from holy Writ, that ſeveral who have aſk'd it, have not obtain'd it, becauſe they aſk'd it too late. We are told of *Eſau*, that *when he would have* Heb. 12. 17.

inherited the bleſſing, he was rejected; and that *he found no place of repentance, tho' he ſought it carefully with tears* True it is, that the bleſſing from which he was excluded was not that of eternal life, but of temporary advantages; that he was rejected, not by God, but by his father *Iſaac*; that the mercies of God are as much above thoſe of man, the moſt compaſſionate of men, as the heaven is above the earth; and that therefore it doth by no means follow, that becauſe *Iſaac* was not in this caſe to be prevail'd on, God is at any time, or by any perſon, inexorable. But however, ſince this example of *Eſau* is propos'd by way of caution to us; ſince we are warn'd againſt ſinning like *Eſau*, leſt our eſtate become deſperate like that of *Eſau*, it ſeems plainly intimated to us by the Apoſtle who gives us this caution, that if we prefer the empty pleaſures of this world to the ſolid joys of the next; if we *ſell* this our ſpiritual *birth-right for a morſel of bread*; if we reject this bleſſing when it is offer'd to us, we may afterwards, when we would inherit it, be rejected of God, and may not find forgiveneſs from him, tho' we ſeek it carefully with penitential ſighs and tears. Heb. 12. 16.

If an humble confeſſion of ſins, if an earneſt imploring of pardon, are ſure and undoubted ſigns of an unfeign'd repentance, then we are ſure that *Saul* was a true and ſincere penitent; but we are as ſure that his repentance was ineffectual for the procuring of his pardon. 1 Sam. 15.24, &c. *Saul ſaid unto Samuel, I have ſinn'd; for I have tranſgreſs'd the commandment of the Lord, and thy words, becauſe I fear'd the people, and obey'd their voice. Now therefore I pray thee pardon my ſin, and turn again with me, that I may worſhip the Lord. And Samuel ſaid unto Saul, I will not return with thee; for thou haſt rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being King over Iſrael.* And tho' the good old Prophet was, upon farther application, wrought upon to intercede with God for him; tho' the King mourn'd bitterly for his own ſins, and *Samuel* alſo mourn'd for the ſins of *Saul*; yet neither the King's prayers, nor the Prophet's interceſſion for pardon were ſufficient to procure it. c. 16. 1. *The Lord ſaid unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, ſeeing I have rejected him from being King over Iſrael?* Tho' there was a change in *Saul*, yet we find that it could not work any change in God; tho' *Saul* repented of the evil he had done, yet God repented not of the evil he had threatned; but executed his vengeance upon him, notwithſtanding his acknowledgment of his guilt, and his earneſt, importunate, reiterated ſupplications for pardon. But it may be ſaid that theſe addreſſes of *Eſau* and of *Saul* might therefore be rejected, becauſe they were notorious, profligate, enormous ſinners. But we have juſt reaſon to be afraid, that if the heinouſneſs of paſt ſins is always an obſtacle to pardon, the caſe of many late penitents will be, not only dangerous, but hopeleſs. The ſins of *Eſau* and of *Saul*, as repreſented to us in the ſacred Hiſtory, do not ſeem ſo extremely grievous and provoking, that we have any warrant to conclude their caſe to be ſo ſingular and extraordinary, that no other ſinners ſhould have any reaſon to fear that they ſhould meet with the like ſeverity.

But to the fruſtrating of our raſh hopes of finding God's ears open to our prayers, whenever we ſhall think fit to deprecate his judgments, upon a fond preſumption that we are not ſo great ſinners as thoſe who have been ſpecified, it may be worth our conſidering farther, that even holy and righteous perſons, as to the general courſe of their lives, have not been always able, by their prayers and tears and ſorrow for ſin, to avert

avert thoſe judgments of God, which they have by their ſins made them-
ſelves obnoxious to. With how great earneſtneſs did *David* entreat for
the life of his child? What forms of humiliation, what methods of re-
pentance, what auſterities of holy diſcipline did he not uſe to procure
the repeal of that ſentence, whereby God had decreed, that *the child* 2 Sam. 12. 14.
which was born unto him in adultery *ſhould*, in puniſhment of his ſin,
ſurely dye? The hiſtory tells us that *David beſought God for the child*, v. 16, 17.
*and faſted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth; and the el-
ders of his houſe aroſe, and went to him to raiſe him up from the earth,
but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them*: or, to ſpeak
in his own more forcible language; *he cried in the day-time unto his God*, Pſal. 22. 2.
and in the night-ſeaſon he was not ſilent; he chaſten'd his ſoul with faſt- 69. 10.
ing, and tears were his meat day and night; he lifted up his voice to God, 42. 3.
that he would remove the ſtroke from him, and not conſume him by ſuch 39. 10.
a terrible blow of his hand; yet, notwithſtanding theſe his ſupplications
and cries, his ſorrow and anguiſh, his ſighs and tears, his faſtings and
watchings, his proſtrations and penance, he was not able to ward off
that blow, or to prevail with God to hear his repeated prayers, to give
ear unto his loud cries, and to *grant the requeſt of his lips*; but the
child whoſe life he ſo earneſtly, ſo humbly, ſo devoutly implor'd, was
ſnatch'd away from him, and God's anger was not by any methods of
repentance wholly to be appeas'd. *Moſes* in the like manner with great Deut. 3. 23, &c.
fervency *beſought God*, that he might *go over and ſee the* promis'd *land*;
but *the Lord was wroth with him, and would not hear him*: he was v. 26.
ſo far from granting his requeſt, that he peremptorily forbid him to re-
new it: *The Lord ſaid unto him, let it ſuffice thee, ſpeak no more unto
me of this matter.*

I WOULD not be thought to ſuggeſt, that the ſins of *David* and *Moſes* were not forgiven by God upon their repentance; or that their prayers were not effectual to their eſcaping the puniſhments reſerv'd for impenitent ſinners in the world to come, tho' they were inſufficient to their eſcaping thoſe particular evils they pray'd againſt; or that God's eternal judgments are never in any caſe to be remov'd by penitential prayers and tears, becauſe his temporal judgments were not in theſe eſpecial caſes remov'd by theſe means; or that no reaſons can be aſſign'd, why God did deny the particular requeſts of theſe perſons, but what will conclude againſt any requeſts that late or dying penitents can make for pardon; but all that I would infer from theſe inſtances, and all that needs to be inferr'd to our purpoſe, is this; that the moſt earneſt prayers and entreaties, the moſt ſincere confeſſions of ſin, and ſupplications for mercy, will not at all times certainly avail for obtaining pardon, and for averting God's judgments; and that therefore we cannot with any ſecurity depend upon theſe means for the making our peace with God, which yet are all that men generally do depend upon, when they defer their repentance to the end of their lives. The principle upon which ſuch perſons ſeem to build all their hopes, is this; that becauſe they ask of God pardon, therefore they ſhall obtain it; becauſe they ſincerely deſire to be acquitted at the laſt day, therefore they ſhall ſurely be acquitted; becauſe they earneſtly ſeek for mercy, therefore they cannot fail to find it.

IF a late repentance will be accepted of by God, there muſt be ſome other reaſon of its acceptance, than the readineſs of God to grant whatever we at any time ask of him: for we find that he hath frequently denied what

even his moſt faithful ſervants have ask'd; and therefore asking alone
is not a ſure and certain means of obtaining. If thoſe who have been
the peculiar favourites of God have not always, by their prayers, been
able to avert thoſe judgments they have pray'd againſt, then thoſe who
have liv'd in a conſtant enmity with him cannot promiſe themſelves better
ſucceſs to their entreaties. If vows and prayers, if ſighs and tears,
have not been able to avert leſſer judgments, or to procure leſſer mercies,
we cannot ſafely rely ſo far upon their force and efficacy, as to
1 Pet. 1. 4. think them of ſufficient value *to purchaſe for us an inheritance incorruptible
and undefil'd, and that fadeth not away. How often hath
God in holy Writ threatned a *ſtubborn and rebellious people*, that *he
would not hear them when they ſhould cry unto him for mercy and pardon*?
What book of the Prophets can we look into, in which we ſhall
Iſai. 1. 15. not find ſome ſuch dreadful menace? *When ye ſpread forth your hands,
I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I*
c. 59. 2. *will not hear: your iniquities have ſeparated between you and your God;
and your ſins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear,* is the
Jerem. 11. 11. voice of God by the mouth of his prophet *Iſaiah*. *I will bring evil upon
them, which they ſhall not be able to eſcape; and tho' they ſhall cry*
v. 14. *unto me, I will not hearken unto them. Therefore pray not thou for this
people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not hear them*
c. 14. 12. *in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble. When they faſt, I will
not hear their cry, and when they offer a burnt-offering and an oblation,
I will not accept them; but I will conſume them by the ſword, and by
the famine, and by the peſtilence*: theſe are very ſevere and peremptory
declarations againſt being prevail'd upon, either by or for obſtinate
ſinners, made by God to the Prophet *Jeremiah*. The ſame decree, expreſs'd
Ezek. 24. 13. 14. in other language, we find reveal'd from heaven by *Ezekiel*: *Becauſe
I have purg'd thee, and thou waſt not purg'd, thou ſhalt not be
purg'd from thy filthineſs any more, till I have caus'd my fury to reſt
upon thee; I the Lord have ſpoken it, it ſhall come to paſs, and I will do
it, I will not go back, neither will I ſpare, neither will I repent; according
to thy ways, and according to thy doings, ſhall they judge thee, ſaith
the Lord God.*

WE are often warn'd in Scripture, that God's conduct towards finners,
Pſal. 18. 26. ners, will be ſuited to their conduct towards him; that *with the froward
Prov. 1. 24, &c. *he will ſhew himſelf froward*; that becauſe *when he hath call'd,
they have refus'd, when he hath ſtretch'd out his hand, they have not
regarded; becauſe they have ſet at nought all his counſel, and would
none of his reproof*; he *alſo will laugh at their calamity, and will mock
when their fear cometh*; that *when their fear cometh as deſolation,
and their deſtruction cometh as a whirl-wind; when diſtreſs and anguiſh
cometh upon them, then ſhall they* in their turn *call upon him, but he
will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek him early, but they ſhall not find him*;
and that *becauſe they hated knowledge, and did not chooſe the fear of
the Lord*, whilſt it was in their choice. They in the days of their proſperity
Zechar. 7. 11, &c. and jollity *refus'd to hearken, and pull'd away the ſhoulder, and
ſtopp'd their ears that they ſhould not hear; yea they made their hearts
as an adamant-ſtone, leſt they ſhould hear the law, and the words which
the Lord of hoſts hath ſent in his Spirit by* the hands of *the Prophets:
therefore* in the day of their anguiſh and diſtreſs *it is come to paſs, that
as he cried, and they would not hear; ſo they cried, and I would not
hear, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.*

THE promiſes of pardon made to ſinners upon their returning unto God are not made more expreſs, than theſe denunciations from heaven, that ſome ſinners will not find pardon upon their ſupplicating for it at the throne of mercy; ſo that it unavoidably follows, either that ſome who repent of their ſins will not, upon their repentance, be forgiven; or that we may with great earneſtneſs, vehemence, and importunity beg of God the pardon of our ſins, and yet finally miſcarry, becauſe this is not to repent in the Goſpel-ſenſe of repenting. Nothing can be a ſufficient ſecurity for men to defer their repentance till a farther time, but a well-grounded aſſurance, that ſuch a repentance, as they ſhall be then able to perform, will avail with God for the remiſſion of their ſins: ſorrow for paſt ſins, vows of obedience for the future, reſolutions of amendment of life, if they ſhould live longer, are all the proofs they can have of their repentance: theſe proofs are fallible, becauſe many who have given theſe teſtimonies of repentance, have fail'd of obtaining the pardon of their ſins; what hath happen'd to others, may alſo happen to us; we have the greater reaſon to fear that we ſhall periſh as they did, becauſe we did not take warning from their examples. What God hath in his Word threatned, he hath executed long ſince upon ſome ſinners who have repented, as far as ſorrow for ſin may be ſtil'd repentance: we take no care to get without the reach of the ſame threats, what reaſon therefore have we to expect that they ſhall not be executed upon us alſo? What plea can we advance in bar of execution?

I HAVE in this diſcourſe gone all along upon this ſuppoſition, that thoſe who defer their repentance till they dye, will then certainly perform all thoſe acts of repentance, which can be perform'd in thoſe circumſtances, when they are moſt favourable. But now you cannot but be aware that this is a very liberal ſuppoſition, and that no one, who defers his repentance for a year, for a day, for a moment, can be ſure that this ſhall be his caſe. For before a man can, with any degree of confidence, defer his repentance to a farther time, there are ſeveral queſtions to be ask'd and anſwer'd by his own conſcience. He who flatters himſelf with ſuch hopes, let him thus interrogate himſelf: "Am I ſure "that death is at that diſtance from me, as I imagine it to be? Am I "ſure that it will not come before the time which I have fix'd upon for "my repentance? As I am reſolv'd not to repent till old age, till an-"other year, till another time of this year, till to morrow; ſo am I "ſure that I ſhall live till I am old, till the next year, week, day, or "moment? Am I ſure that I ſhall not be taken off by a ſudden and "unforeſeen accident, which will give me no leiſure to prepare my ſelf "for death? Or am I ſure that the ſickneſs which ſhall carry me out of "the world, will approach in ſuch ſlow forms, as to permit me the free "and undiſturb'd uſe of my reaſon? Am I ſure that the ſame obſtacles "which hinder me from repenting now, will not hinder me from re-"penting at any other time? Am I ſure that the ſame ſuccours of God's "grace, which are now offer'd me, will be always afforded? Am I ſure "that the day allotted me by God for repentance is commenſurate to "the days of my life? Am I ſure that by my long ſinning I ſhall not "quite benumm my conſcience, ſo as that it ſhall be paſt feeling? Am "I ſure that I ſhall not forfeit God's grace, or that if he doth ſtill diſ-"penſe it, I ſhall not defeat its operation"? Theſe and many other ſuch queſtions muſt we put to our ſelves, and be able to anſwer them all in the affirmative, before we can juſtifie to God, or to our ſelves, the delay of our repentance to a farther day: but every one, who will be true to his own ſoul, muſt acknowledge, that there is not one of theſe queſtions but muſt be anſwer'd in the negative, and therefore the folly of delaying our repentance any longer is inexpreſſible and unaccountable.

LET us therefore catch hold of this opportunity, which is now offer'd us, and which poſſibly is the laſt that will be offer'd to ſome of us, of turning unto God. Let not this holy ſeaſon, which is ſet apart by the piety of the Church for the more ſolemn duties of repentance, ſlip out of our hands, and be added to our accounts, inſtead of being employ'd in making our peace with God. Let us this day hear the voice of God calling us to repentance, leſt this call ſhould never be repeated, or, tho' repeated, ſhould never prove effectual. Which that we may do, God grant for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

SERMON LIII.

The danger of Relapſing.

2 Pet. II. 20.

If after they have eſcap'd the pollutions of the world, thro' the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning.

NONE of all the Apoſtles was better inſtructed in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, than was St. *Peter*; nor could any one be more ſenſible of the ſin and danger of apoſtacy, than he, who having forſaken all to follow Chriſt, did in the times of difficulty forſake his Maſter, even *denying the Lord that bought him*: but thro' the tender mercies of that Saviour whom he denied, he was after a ſincere repentance reſtor'd to his former ſtate; and, according to the monition given him by Chriſt, being himſelf *converted*, doth here *ſtrengthen his brethren*. In order to this he repreſents to them the dangerous condition of thoſe, who having once *eſcap'd the pollutions of the world, are again entangled therein and overcome*; *the latter end of theſe men* he pronounces to be *worſe than the beginning*. Luk. 22. 32.

NOW that the condition of thoſe who relapſe from a virtuous to a vicious courſe of life, is more ſinful and more dangerous, than the ſtate of ſuch as never pretended to virtue and piety, will appear from theſe two conſiderations:

I. BECAUSE the ſins of ſuch relapſers are, whilſt continued in, much more heinous; and

II. BECAUSE there is much leſs probability of their recovering themſelves out of this ſinful ſtate by repentance.

Firſt, THE ſins of thoſe who relapſe are, whilſt continued in, more heinous; and that on theſe four accounts,

1. Becauſe they are committed againſt greater knowledge.
2. Becauſe they are committed againſt greater ſtrength to obey.
3. Becauſe they tend more to the diſhonour of God.
4. Becauſe they are committed againſt greater obligations to obedience.

The *1ſt* reaſon aſſign'd, why the ſins of ſuch as relapſe are aggravated with deeper guilt, is, becauſe they are committed againſt greater knowledge.

All ſins are greater or leſs in proportion to the knowledge we have of our duty. The law of God is that rule, by which we ought to govern all our actions; but it cannot be a rule to us any farther than it is known by us. Ignorance indeed, if it be groſs and affected, will not be an excuſe for our tranſgreſſing the law; but in this caſe we are not culpable for violating the law which we know not, but for offending againſt that law which we know. For tho' we may not be acquainted with the particulars of our duty, yet this at leaſt we know, that we ought to inform our ſelves; and for not doing this, for neglecting this our known duty, we are juſtly accountable: ſo that it will ſtill be true, that our actions are no farther morally evil, than as they are the tranſgreſſions of a known law. Now if the very nature of *ſin* conſiſts in this, that it *is the tranſgreſſion of a* known *law*; then the more the law is known, the greater, the more *ſinful* ſin will be. Now whatever pretences of ignorance may be made by other men, it is certain that he who hath for ſome time liv'd up to the laws of God, cannot plead ignorance of them. The ſureſt knowledge of moral duties is that which is attain'd by practice: it is indeed poſſible for a man to know his duty, who never performs it; but ſtill there is as much difference betwixt a ſpeculative and a practical knowledge of our duty, as between our being acquainted with a road from a tranſient view of it in a map, and from our having frequently travell'd over it. As well may an experienc'd pilot pretend not to know his compaſs, as he, who hath for ſome time ſteer'd his courſe by the laws of God, pretend to be ignorant of them. They have, during his integrity, took up his thoughts; he muſt have frequently meditated upon them, in order to his regulating his actions by them: when he hath enquir'd of himſelf what he ought to do, what to leave undone, they have been his guide to direct his paths; and when he hath reflected on his paſt actions, they have been the meaſure, by which he hath examin'd the rectitude or obliquity of them: by theſe means they have made a ſtrong impreſſion on his mind, and he muſt offer great violence to himſelf before he can deface characters, which are ſo deeply imprinted on his ſoul. Such objects indeed, as ſtrike lightly upon our thoughts, may be quickly and eaſily forgot; but thoſe things, which the ſoul attends to, which ſhe dwells upon, cannot ſo ſoon ſlip out of our memories. Now the duties of the Chriſtian life are of ſuch concern in themſelves, and to one, who hath once thought himſelf oblig'd by them, muſt have then appear'd of ſo great moment to him, that when he hath thought of them at all, he muſt have attended to them with the greateſt ſeriouſneſs, and the moſt ſteady application; his reaſon hath often repreſented them as juſt and fit to be obſerv'd; his will hath clos'd with his judgment, and determin'd him to a due obſervance of them; his affections have been charm'd with the pleaſure, which he hath found in keeping them; and becauſe *his delight hath been in God's ſtatutes,* therefore he cannot eaſily *forget his word.* Had he been leſs knowing

1 John 3. 4.

knowing, he had been leſs culpable; but becauſe *he knew his Lord's will, and did not according to his will, he ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes.*

BUT 2*dly*, the ſins of ſuch as relapſe are greater, becauſe committed againſt greater ſtrength to obey.

ALL the rational pleas which can be made for excuſing or for extenuating our guilt, muſt be taken either from our ignorance, or from our infirmity; from our want of knowledge rightly to diſcern our duty, or want of power faithfully to perform it. In order to our going the right way, we muſt have feet to carry us, as well as eyes to guide us; and it will not be enough that it lies plain before us, unleſs our ſtrength be ſuch that we can paſs it. If therefore we would make a true judgment concerning the heinouſneſs of any ſin, we muſt not only examine how plain or difficult our duty is to be known, but alſo how eaſie or hard it is to be practis'd. What is utterly impoſſible to be done, that, if it be left undone, leaves no ſtain of guilt behind it: the more difficult any duty is, the nearer approaches it makes to impoſſibility, and conſequently the leſs culpable will the non-performance of that duty be. But whatever frightful notions other men may form to themſelves of the difficulty of Chriſtian duties, how much ſoever they may complain of the infirmity of their natures; yet this complaint comes with a very ill grace from the mouth of one, whoſe own paſt practice is able to confute it. The difficulties of a virtuous courſe are then greateſt, when we firſt enter upon it: there will be for ſome time a violent ſtruggle betwixt the old and the new man; for there is as yet a wrong biaſs on the ſoul, which carries it another way than reaſon and religion direct: but tho' we may be apt to fret under the yoke at firſt, yet when we have longer enur'd our necks to it, it will by degrees fit eaſier upon us, and we ſhall be much more able to bear it. Now this is the caſe of every one, who hath for ſome time trodden in the paths of righteouſneſs: thoſe ways, which at firſt were rough and difficult, after they have been often beaten, become more ſmooth and paſſable: our ſtrength encreaſes gradually with the proficiency we make; every ſtep which is taken renders the next eaſier; and our progreſs is like that of heavy bodies towards their centre, which the farther they have gone, the more briskly they ſtill move onwards, till they come to the place of their reſt. Our ſpiritual enemies, when they have once been entirely defeated, cannot on a ſudden recover their ſtrength; the fleſh, tho' for ſome time it may war againſt the ſpirit, yet when it is once ſubdu'd by it, quietly ſubmits to the power of the conqueror; *the devil*, if he finds a vigorous reſiſtance, will at laſt *flee from us*; and when *our faith hath* once *overcome the world, the victory* is much more eaſily kept, than it was got. Jam. 4. 7. 1 Joh. 5. 5. Now when the ſtrength of the enemy is ſo much impair'd, and our own ſo much improv'd; when temptations, by being often reſiſted, have loſt their force, and the acts of virtue, by being frequently repeated, are grown more natural to us; if after all theſe advantages we relapſe, the eaſineſs of our duty ſtrongly aggravates the guilt of our apoſtacy, and the greater heights we were arriv'd to, the more dangerous will our fall be.

BUT 3*dly*, The ſins of ſuch as relapſe are yet greater, becauſe they tend more to the diſhonour of God.

WHATSOEVER *we do*, we are commanded to *do* it *to the glory of God*: this was the end for which he created us, and to which conſequently all our actions ought to tend: as far therefore as they ſwerve from this end, ſo far do they decline from that eternal rule of righteouſneſs, by which they ought to be meaſur'd. Now tho' all ſins derogate from the honour of God, yet not all equally: thoſe are moſt repugnant to his glory, moſt fitted to bring a ſcandal on religion, which are committed by the zealous profeſſors of it. He who hath for ſome time made himſelf remarkable by a ſtrict obſervance of God's laws, hath thereby openly declar'd for the intereſts of virtue and piety: he is now to ſuſtain no leſs a character than that of a champion for the cauſe of God; and men will be apt to judge of the merits of this cauſe by the conduct of him who pretends to maintain it: they will think it reaſonable to form their opinions of religion by his, and to have no greater concern for it than he hath. If his actions are govern'd by that faith which he profeſſes, they will be inclin'd to think that there is ſomething of reality in it; but if his ways run counter to thoſe which his religion directs, they will judge of his inward ſentiments which they cannot ſee, by his outward practice which they do ſee: they will think he believes, as they obſerve he acts; and they will be willing to believe no farther than they ſuppoſe he believes. The vices of one, who hath been conſtantly and uniformly wicked, can do no great prejudice to the honour of religion: he is not allow'd to be a fit judge betwixt the pretences of virtue and vice, who hath always adher'd to the one, and never attended to the pleas of the other; but he who from a godly, ſober, and righteous life, relapſes to impious and wicked courſes, is ſuppos'd to have made the trial, and to declare for ſin upon experience and choice: if virtue had really any charms in it, 'tis concluded they would have been ſtrong enough to have kept him firm to her intereſt; and becauſe vice hath the preference in his practice, 'tis preſently concluded that it is more eligible in it ſelf. Rom. 2. 23. Thus do thoſe *who make their boaſt of the law, thro' breaking the law diſhonour God*: whilſt their *converſation* is not *as becometh* the truth, *the name of God is* defil'd amongſt thoſe, who are the enemies of it; and, which is much to be lamented, even their good actions help to aggravate their guilt; becauſe the more celebrated their piety hath been, the more ſcandalous their ſins are.

BUT 4*thly*, The ſins of ſuch as relapſe are yet greater, becauſe they are committed againſt greater obligations to obedience.

EVERY bleſſing we receive from the hands of God is a new additional tie to the obſervance of his laws. None have had larger ſhares of the greateſt bleſſings God can beſtow on man, than thoſe who by his reſtraining grace have eſcap'd the pollutions of the world; and therefore none are more ſtrongly bound than they are by theſe cords of love. What our own judgment repreſents as fit to be done, what upon mature deliberation we have made our choice, that, unleſs there ſhould be reaſon for changing our judgment, and repenting of our choice, we are oblig'd to purſue. Thoſe who have conform'd their lives to the precepts of the Goſpel, muſt be ſuppos'd to have been once convinc'd, that a religious life was to be preferr'd to a wicked courſe; the nature of good and evil is not ſince chang'd; their experience cannot have convinc'd them of any miſtake; there is no reaſon for altering their judgment; and whilſt that continues the ſame, their practice ought to be conformable to it. But yet farther, ſuch men muſt reaſonably be ſuppos'd to have made frequent vows of obedience: they have entred into a ſolemn covenant with God, and this covenant hath been often renew'd: when they have been conſcious of any tranſgreſſion of the laws of God, they have felt the horrors of a broken and contrite heart, and, in this agony of their ſouls, have broken out into the moſt pathetick and warm expreſſions of their being reſolv'd upon a more entire obedience for the time to come; the performance of theſe vows they have made the condition of their pardon, and have begg'd of God to forgive their ſins upon no other terms, than their being true to thoſe promiſes. After vows made with ſuch ſolemnity, repeated frequently, ratified often with the blood of Chriſt at their approaches to his holy altar, every tranſgreſſion of their duty is aggravated with the heinous guilt of deliberate perjury.

It would be eaſie to purſue this ſubject yet farther, and to carry the guilt of relapſers ſtill higher; but it were endleſs to view this body of ſin in all its dimenſions. What hath been deliver'd may ſuffice to give us, tho' not a full and adequate ſenſe of it, yet ſuch a notion of the danger of this ſtate, as may make us careful how we fall into it. For if ſins committed againſt the evident knowledge of our duty, againſt the plain dictates of our conſcience, againſt that eaſineſs of obedience which by our former practice we had acquir'd, againſt the motions of God's bleſſed Spirit, againſt the honour of his holy name and religion, againſt the ſtrongeſt obligations and ſtricteſt vows of obedience; if ſuch ſins as theſe are to be reckon'd amongſt the moſt heinous and provoking, then the condition of ſuch as relapſe from a godly to a wicked life, whilſt continued in, muſt be acknowledg'd very dangerous. Out of this dangerous ſtate, into which all thoſe who relapſe do plunge themſelves, there are no means of recovery but by a ſincere and unfeign'd repentance; and the more difficult that recovery is, the more hazardous will the condition of ſuch back-ſliders ſtill appear. It remains therefore to be prov'd, that as the ſtate of ſuch is, whilſt continu'd in, moſt ſinful; ſo there are leſs hopes of recovery out of it by repentance. And this will appear, whether it be conſider'd

1. That there is leſs probability ſuch perſons ſhould ever go about to repent: or
2. That there are leſs hopes, that their repentance ſhould prove effectual.

And 1*ſt*, There is leſs probability ſuch perſons ſhould ever go about to repent.

It is a very deplorable conſideration, that thoſe evil habits which require much time to maſter, and which are not to be rooted out but by ſlow and leiſurely degrees, yet if after ſome abſtinence they are again indulg'd, do return upon us with their full vigour, and with all their former ſtrength. The relaps'd ſinner meets his former crimes with the ſame pleaſure, with which we are wont to receive an old boſom friend; and the intermiſſion gives the ſin at its return a new and better reliſh. The ſenſual appetites muſt now be made amends for the long abſtinence they have endur'd; and he who repents of his virtue, will be ſure to ſin apace, that he may recover the ground which he thinks he hath loſt in the ſervice of God and of religion. His conſcience, which is bold and troubleſom, muſt be lull'd aſleep; and he muſt find out freſh vices to divert his thoughts from thoſe melancholly reflections, which might otherwiſe diſturb him. For whilſt he walk'd in the ways of righteouſneſs, he had receiv'd ſtrong impreſſions of the neceſſity of an holy life: tho' he is very willing, he is not able to ſtifle on a ſudden all his former notions; he can neither ſhake them off, nor yet be eaſie under them: they do ſome times break in upon him, and raiſe violent tempeſts in his ſoul: the common methods of diverſion are not able to keep them at a diſtance; he muſt therefore find out ſome other way of being at eaſe; he muſt, in his own defence, purſue ſuch courſes as are moſt likely to drive away theſe perplexing thoughts: his paſſions muſt be employ'd, that his underſtanding may not have leiſure to reflect; many and various objects muſt be found out to entertain his ſenſes, leſt upon the ſhorteſt interruption his awaken'd conſcience ſhould interpoſe: and the pleaſures, which he now chooſes, muſt be the moſt groſs and ſenſual, leſt if they were too feeble, they might not affect him ſo far, as to take off his mind entirely from cool and ſober thoughts. In this violent hurry of his paſſions there will be no room for thoſe ſerious reflections, which ſhould lead him to repentance; he is carried on by the torrent of his unruly luſts; and the farther he departs from the right way, the leſs hopes there are of his ever returning into it; and that the rather, becauſe he is now upon the guard againſt all the methods that ſhould reduce him: for as the thoughts of reformation are not likely to ariſe from within, ſo neither will they eaſily be admitted from without. For he who takes ſuch care to ſilence the checks of his own conſcience, will much more hate the reproof of a friend. The offices of religion muſt be intermitted, leſt they ſhould refreſh the thoughts of his guilt and danger: and he who before conſulted the oracles of God to know his duty, is now careful to ſhut his eyes and ſtop his ears againſt them, becauſe they forewarn him of his puniſhment. Thus ſollicitous is he to ſtop up all the avenues, by which the thoughts of repentance might enter; and whilſt he is thus obſtinately bent againſt the moſt proper remedies, we have great reaſon to doubt of his recovery.

BUT 2*dly*, Should the relaps'd ſinner entertain thoughts of repentance, 'tis yet to be fear'd that this repentance may not prove effectual.

IN every work which we undertake, we proceed more or leſs vigorouſly in proportion to the different hopes we have of ſucceſs. The more difficult the work is, the more neceſſary it is that we be encourag'd by the proſpect of ſome conſiderable advantage. But where the labour is great, and the hopes of ſucceſs little, we ſhall be apt to deſpond, and to ſit down in a lazy and idle deſpair. Now theſe are the circumſtances of a relaps'd ſinner; his repentance is a work of great difficulty, and his hopes of acceptance are very faint: his penitential ſorrows muſt bear a proportion to his guilt; and ſince this hath been ſo deeply aggravated, thoſe muſt be equally ſharp and piercing. All thoſe ſigns of a *godly ſorrow*, which St. *Paul* hath enumerated, muſt appear after a more eminent and conſpicuous manner in his repentance. For *what carefulneſs* ought there to be, where there hath been ſo ſcandalous a neglect? *What clearing of himſelf* will be ſufficient to purge him, who hath contracted ſo foul a guilt? *What indignation* muſt he ſhew for then drawing back, when he was juſt within the reach of the promis'd reward? *What fear*, leſt God in his anger ſhould reject him, and leſt his preſent repentance ſhould prove like his former, ſuch as is *to be repented of*? *What vehement deſire* of recovering that bleſſed ſtate, from which he lately fell? *What zeal* to promote God's honour, which his ſins have ſo much wounded? And *what revenge* on himſelf for ſo baſe and ungrateful apoſtacy? By theſe ſteps muſt the back-ſlider recover the ground, which he hath loſt; thro' all theſe difficulties muſt he preſs forwards to that mark which he cannot, with any great degree of confidence, promiſe himſelf, after all his labour, to compaſs. For there are very dif- Rom. 7, 10, 11.

diſcouraging threats gone out from the throne of the Almighty againſt apoſtates. We are taught, that *it is impoſſible for thoſe, who were once enlightned and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they ſhall fall away, to renew them again to repentance, ſeeing they crucifie to themſelves the ſon of God afreſh, and put him to an open ſhame.* Heb. 6. 4.

Now whatever favourable conſtruction may be made of theſe words; whether, by thoſe who fall away, are to be underſtood only apoſtates from the belief of the Chriſtian religion, or thoſe who ſtill hold the faith of Chriſt, but *hold* it in *unrighteouſneſs*; whether the impoſſibility here declar'd is abſolute and peremptory, or amounts to no more than a great difficulty; whether the renovation of ſuch as fall away is here pronounc'd utterly impoſſible, or only impracticable according to the common methods of reſtoring ſinners; how much ſoever, I ſay, we ſoften this harſh ſentence, yet we ſhall not be able to diſarm it of the terror it carries againſt relaps'd ſinners. For Chriſt hath not reveal'd to us his religion barely as a ſyſtem of truths to be believ'd, but much more as a ſcheme of duties to be practis'd by us: ſo that if apoſtacy from the belief of the Chriſtian religion is deſperate, then a relapſe from a Chriſtian courſe of life muſt at leaſt be very hazardous. The back-ſliding ſinner offends againſt the ſame mercies as the apoſtate; for he was once *enlightned* in baptiſm, and he there taſted of *the heavenly gift*, the remiſſion of ſins by baptiſm: he was made *partaker of the holy Ghoſt*, which was then given, and which hath ſince aſſiſted him in the duties of an holy life: he hath *taſted of the good word of God*, having been inſtructed in the doctrines of the Goſpel, and having for ſome time liv'd up to them; he hath alſo *taſted* of *the powers of the world to come*, hath took pleaſure in the teſtimony of a good conſcience, and hath been fill'd with ſuch joys, as have been both a fore-taſt and earneſt of thoſe which will be the portion of the bleſſed to all eternity. He cannot indeed, according to the rigour of the letter, be charg'd with *crucifying the Son of God, and putting him to an open ſhame*, as neither can thoſe who totally renounce the faith of Chriſt; but if theſe are ſaid to crucifie him, becauſe they bring a diſhonour on his religion by deſerting it, then will this imputation, tho' not equally, yet in proportion involve thoſe, who bring a ſcandal on Chriſt's religion by an unchriſtian practice. There muſt therefore be ſome extraordinary effuſion of God's grace to recall the relaps'd ſinner: but what reaſon hath he to expect this ſupernatural aid, who hath already ſo much abus'd it? Why ſhould he hope the Holy Spirit will cooperate with him, who hath taken ſo much pains to ſtifle all his former motions? Is it not much more to be fear'd leſt *the unclean ſpirit*, which was before driven out of his ſoul, ſhould *take to himſelf ſeven other ſpirits more wicked than himſelf*, and come *and dwell there*; *and* thus ſhall *the laſt ſtate of that man be worſe than the firſt*. Matth. 12.45. God forbid, that I ſhould pronounce this to be the certain doom of all, who after a courſe of piety return to a wicked life. *We have not ſo learn'd Chriſt* as to limit his unbounded mercies; as we do not think the piety of the beſt men indefectible, for "after they have receiv'd the Holy Ghoſt, "they may depart from grace given, and fall into ſin", ſo neither do we look upon the ſins of the moſt wicked to be unpardonable; for "by the "grace of God they may riſe again, and amend their lives". But tho' none are to be caſt off as reprobates, who unfeignedly repent, yet the repentance of ſome may be very difficult; and tho' the caſe of ſuch as relapſe is not quite deſperate, yet what hath been ſaid is ſufficient to prove it extremely hazardous.

Now if the ſin and hazard of relapſing be ſo great, it will be the duty of all who yet ſtand, to take care leſt they fall; and of thoſe who are faln, to uſe all diligence to recover their ground. The ſtate of the former is happy, but not ſecure, and therefore they ought to be upon their guard; the conduct of the latter is very dangerous, but not quite deſperate, and therefore they ought to *work out their ſalvation with fear and trembling*. Phil. 2. 12. Eternal happineſs is the reward only of thoſe few who *perſevere unto the end*; and eternal puniſhment will be the lot only of ſuch, it were to be wiſh'd few, as are finally impenitent: neither ſhall he who ſtarts back be ſav'd for his paſt righteouſneſs, nor he who is truly penitent be condemn'd for his paſt iniquity. Knowing therefore the abſolute neceſſity of perſeverance, and the extreme danger of *drawing back*, let us, as we value our immortal ſouls, take diligent heed how we fall into, or at leaſt how we continue in, a ſtate of apoſtacy. Let us remember, that it is a crime deteſted both by God and man. All mankind agree to fix a brand of infamy and reproach on renegades. The diſcipline of the Church hath been remarkably ſevere againſt the laps'd. All Governments puniſh a rebel and deſerter more than a publick and profeſs'd enemy. And God hath declar'd with great ſolemnity, that *if any one draw back, his ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in him.* Heb. 10, 38. *He* therefore *that is righteous, let him be righteous ſtill*; *and he that is holy, let him be holy ſtill*: *for behold Chriſt cometh, and his reward is with him, to give every man according to his work.* Rev. 22. 11, 12.

SER-

SERMON LIV.

Good Works not meritorious.

Heb. VI. 10.

God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love.

THIS declaration of the Apoſtle contains in it a very ſtrong and powerful, and, as one would be apt to think, an effectual and irreſiſtible motive to acts of charity, and to the exerciſe of all other Chriſtian graces. Every alms we beſtow, every good work we do, is an indication of our love to God; and God, who is a bountiful *rewarder of thoſe that diligently ſeek him*, and whoſe love to his creatures as far exceeds their love to him, as his power and goodneſs ſurpaſſes theirs, will not let any one good action of ours, which proceeds from the love of him, be forgotten or unrewarded: *God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.*

This aſſertion of the Apoſtle will be capable of two different conſtructions according as we interpret the word *unrighteous.* He is righteous in the moſt ſtrict and proper ſenſe of the word, who gives to every one his due; he unrighteous, who deprives any one of that which he hath a juſt right to. But he is righteous in a larger ſenſe of the word, who is faithful to his promiſes, and who grants to others what he had promis'd to grant, tho' he is not perhaps in ſtrict juſtice bound thereunto; and conſequently he is unrighteous, who having promis'd a favour either abſolutely or conditionally, doth not make good to the party that promiſe. God would not be unrighteous in the firſt ſenſe of the word tho' he ſhould forget, that is, tho' he ſhould not reward, our good works with the glories of heaven, becauſe he is not in ſtrict juſtice oblig'd to do it; but God would be unrighteous in the latter ſenſe of the word, that is, he would be unmindful of his promiſes, if he ſhould forget, that is, if he ſhould not reward our good works, done out of unfeign'd love to him, with eternal life; becauſe in the evangelical covenant he hath been graciouſly pleas'd, out of his infinite goodneſs, to engage himſelf there-

thereunto. Our beſt actions do not deſerve eternal life, and therefore we have no right to it; but God hath promis'd eternal life to the obedient, and therefore upon our ſincere obedience we may aſſuredly expect it. Two extremes there are which we ought carefully to avoid in this matter, as being both of dangerous conſequence; we muſt not think our good actions abſolutely perfect, and meritorious in the ſight of God, leſt we grow proud, inſolent, and preſumptuous; and we muſt not imagine them to be uſeleſs and inſignificant, leſt we grow ſlothful, diſſolute, and careleſs. For the avoidance of theſe pernicious errors, either of which would have a fatal influence on our Chriſtian practice, and on our ſpiritual eſtate, I ſhall endeavour to ſtate this matter aright, and to ſhew

I. In what ſenſe God would not be unrighteous, that is, unjuſt, tho' he ſhould forget our good works, that is, tho' he ſhould not reward us with eternal life for them.

II. In what other ſenſe we may conclude, that becauſe God is not unrighteous, that is, not regardleſs of his promiſes, therefore he will not forget our good works, but will reward us for them with the glories of heaven, and happineſs everlaſting.

The groſſeſt miſtake in this matter, and that which humble and devout Chriſtians ought to keep at the greateſt diſtance from, is the bold and aſſuming aſſertion of thoſe, who are ſo hardy as to maintain, that eternal life is in ſtrict juſtice and of right due to the good actions of men, antecedently to any covenant of God, or to any gracious promiſe made by him: that good works do of themſelves, in their own nature, and for their own ſakes, truly and properly deſerve eternal life, even as much as evil works do on their own account, and from their own demerit, deſerve eternal death: that by obedience to the laws of God we have an unqueſtionable title to eternal happineſs, which we may ſafely and ſecurely plead at the tribunal of God's juſtice: that we may fairly challenge heaven, as the purchaſe of our good works, for which we have paid a full and ſufficient price, and from which therefore we cannot be debarr'd, without great wrong and manifeſt injury done unto us. How contrary this arrogant plea is to Scripture, and to right reaſon; to the eſtabliſh'd rules of juſtice, and to the principles of our holy religion, will be manifeſt from a ſlight and curſory conſideration of ſome undeniable truths, either in themſelves ſelf-evident, or ſo plainly reveal'd to us in holy Writ, that, without queſtioning the veracity of God, we can form no doubt of them. For, in the

Firſt Place, whatſoever good action a man can perform; whatever kinds, degrees, or meaſures of virtue he can attain and exerciſe; what good thing ſoever he is, with the utmoſt diligence, application, and vigour of mind, able to do; that he upon many accounts owes unto God his Maker, his Preſerver, his Benefactor: and tho' he ſhould exactly obey all God's laws at all times, and in all reſpects; yet he would, in regard of God, only pay a juſt and rightful debt. But no one ſurely, who pays to another what he ſtrictly owes him, can thereby oblige that other to beſtow on him a reward, or can make him properly his debtor. He ceaſes, indeed, to be himſelf any longer a debtor to that other; but he doth not for that reaſon commence his creditor. Nothing is now farther due from him; but neither doth any thing thereby become due to him.

The dependence of man upon God, of the creature upon the Creator, of the ranſom'd upon the Redeemer, muſt be acknowledg'd to be much greater, than that of a ſervant upon his maſter, or even of a ſlave upon his Lord. But now whatever a ſlave doth in the ſervice of his maſter, he hath no right of exacting a reward for it from his Lord and owner: for whatever he hath, whatever by his labour he procures, is wholly and entirely not his own, but his Lord's; he hath no propriety in or of himſelf, no diſpoſal of his own perſon, actions, or poſſeſſions; but whatever by his induſtry he gains, he acquires it, not to himſelf, or for his own benefit, but to the proper uſe, and for the entire advantage of his Lord, under whoſe dominion he is, and for whoſe behoof he works. How much leſs therefore ſhall a mortal man make God his debtor? God, from whom he hath receiv'd all he hath, and all he is? God, who at firſt freely gave him his being, and who continually preſerves him in it? God, *in whom he lives and moves*; and to whom therefore all his life, and all his motions ought of right to be dedicated? God, who hath a more arbitrary right and abſolute power over us, than any the moſt deſpotick maſter can have over his ſlave; and to whom moreover we owe, on account of his goodneſs as well as his authority, more duty and ſubjection, more obedience and reverence, more honour and thanks, than any ſon can poſſibly owe to the moſt tender, moſt affectionate, moſt indulgent father.

Even amongſt equals no one is of right, and in ſtrict juſtice, oblig'd to recompenſe the labour and pains of another, but he who hath freely and voluntarily bound himſelf thereunto by ſome pact and covenant; or who at leaſt is enforc'd thereunto by the law of ſome ſuperior. What conſideration therefore can oblige God to beſtow upon man eternal life, but his own free and gracious promiſe, ſince he hath no ſuperior; nor can any law be preſcrib'd to him, but what he vouchſafes to preſcribe to himſelf, and to guide his own actions and diſpenſations by? To this it may be farther added, that all our good thoughts, words, and works proceed entirely from the grace of God, and are his free gifts beſtow'd upon us, out of his mere bounty and mercy. Should God therefore, by beſtowing on us one grace, be thereby in juſtice oblig'd, for that very reaſon, to beſtow on us another? Can it with any colour of reaſon be pretended, that he, who hath receiv'd a benefit from any one, doth by ſuch reception of a former benefit undeſerv'd, acquire a title to exact from his benefactor ſtill farther and greater benefits? So far are our beſt works from being a benefit beſtow'd by men upon God, that, on the contrary, they ought to be numbred amongſt the greateſt benefits which God doth in this world beſtow on men; on account of which we are deeply indebted to him, and for which we are bound to pay our moſt thankful acknowledgments. Can therefore thoſe performances, which are to be acknowledg'd and celebrated as the greateſt favours, and moſt valuable gifts of God to us, be deem'd benefits done to him, on account of which he ſhall be oblig'd to pay his acknowledgments, and render his thanks to us? Hath not our bleſſed Saviour taken ſufficient care to ſtop the mouths of thoſe, who are ſo inſolent as to challenge a recompence from God for their good actions, as any ways due to them in point of gratitude? Hath he not in his Goſpel taught us, that the faithful are like to thoſe ſervants, to whom, tho' they have honeſtly and diligently perform'd their task, yet their maſter is ſo far from owing any reward, that he is not bound ſo much as to thank them for their ſervices? *Doth he thank that ſervant, becauſe he did the things that were com-* Luke 17.9,10.

manded him? I trow not. So likewiſe ye, when ye have done all thoſe things which are commanded you, ſay, we are unprofitable ſervants.

BUT theſe errors of God's being bound, either in ſtrict juſtice, or ſo much as in gratitude, to reward our good works with eternal life on account of their intrinſick worth, or of their being profitable to him, need not any farther be expos'd, ſince they are ſo groſs, as to have but very few advocates even in the Church of *Rome*. What the moderate men of that communion contend for is this; that good works do merit eternal life, tho' not in themſelves, yet in regard to the principle from which they proceed, and the acceptableneſs of the perſons by whom they are perform'd: for they are, ſay they, wrought by the Spirit of God dwelling and operating in his Saints; they have their origine, their riſe, their growth, their conſummation from the grace of Chriſt; they are perform'd by thoſe whom God hath adopted to be his children, and whom, for the ſake of his Son, he doth more peculiarly love: and in theſe regards therefore, tho' not on their own account, they are highly meritorious.

NOW true it is, that the good actions of the regenerate are therefore more acceptable to God, becauſe of the relation which ſuch regenerate perſons have to God in Chriſt; they do derive a value from the blood of Chriſt, for the ſake of which thoſe good actions are accepted to ſalvation, which on their own account can have no pretence to ſuch a ſuper-abundant reward: but hereby no value, no price, no addition of worth accrues properly to the works themſelves; they are ſtill defective and imperfect; but their deficiency and imperfection is thro' the mercy of God over-look'd: they cannot bear a ſtrict and rigorous examination, according to the ſevere rules of juſtice; but they are therefore approv'd, becauſe God is pleas'd, for the ſake of Chriſt, *not to enter into* a ſtrict and rigorous *judgment with his ſervants*: they are on account of Chriſt's merits ſo far valued by God, that he will vouchſafe to reward them with eternal life; but then they are not eſteem'd according to their own intrinſick work, but thro' the favour of God are much over-rated. Now ſo far are the obedience which Chriſtians pay to the laws of God, and the love which they bear to him, from being more valuable and meritorious, becauſe God has adopted them to be his children, and has made them the heirs of his kingdom, and by the continual aſſiſtance of his Spirit doth incline, excite, and powerfully diſpoſe them to works of piety and virtue, that if the ſame love, and the ſame obedience were paid to God by thoſe, whom he had not ſo much favour'd, or to whom he had not afforded ſo great helps, they would be more valuable, and would deſerve greater commendation, and a more ample recompence. For certainly if two perſons equally love a third, by whom they have not been equally favour'd, he who hath receiv'd the fewer or ſmaller favours to engage his love, deſerves the greater thanks: and if two perſons not equally aſſiſted perform one and the ſame task with equal exactneſs, he who has the leaſt aſſiſtance has a title to the greateſt praiſe. If therefore good actions, eſtimated according to the intrinſick goodneſs of the actions conſider'd in themſelves, and in reſpect to their conformity to the divine law, are not ſtrictly worthy of eternal happineſs, nor of an equal value and price with it, then neither can they acquire ſuch tranſcendent value and worth from the grace of Chriſt, by the influence and aſſiſtance of which they are done; or from the relation or acceptableneſs of the perſon, by whom they are perform'd.

FROM

FROM what hath been ſaid concerning the intrinſick value of good works, and of the title which thoſe who perform them may challenge to a reward from the hands of God, it is, I think, ſufficiently evident, that God might without unrighteouſneſs, that is, without doing any wrong to his creatures, without detaining from them any thing which is their due, any thing which they can claim as a juſt debt, refuſe to recompenſe their beſt actions with eternal life: that the very beſt works which are done by the very beſt of men are not worthy of everlaſting happineſs, if they are rated according to their own intrinſick value; that, whatſoever worth may be ſuppos'd to be in them, God, antecedently to his covenant made with men, and his gracious promiſes vouchſaf'd to them, is not tied to reward them with the glories of heaven: that the promiſe of eternal life upon the terms of the Goſpel is an act of free grace, and proceeds, not from the juſtice, but merely from the mercy of God: that our good deeds are not worthy of eternal bliſs in the ſame ſenſe, as our evil deeds are worthy of eternal miſery: that therefore the pretence of meriting heaven by our good actions is idle, preſumptuous, and highly derogatory to the honour of God: that to place ſo much ſtreſs and confidence in them, is the likelieſt way to loſe the fruit and benefit of them: that when we look back upon our paſt lives, and find that by the grace of God we have been reſtrain'd from ſome ſins, and have been enabled to do ſome good in the world, we may from thence form better hopes of our eternal ſtate, than if we had committed thoſe ſins, or omitted thoſe duties; but that we have no reaſon from thence with the proud *Phariſee* to boaſt of our ſelves, that we are righteous, or to challenge from God a reward, as he is juſt and righteous; but ought each of us with the humble and devout *Publican* to ſmite upon our breaſts, and to ſay, *God be merciful to me a ſinner.*

BUT now, leſt to avoid one extreme we ſhould fooliſhly run into another; leſt for fear of carrying the value of our good actions too high, we ſhould on the other ſide ſink their price too low; leſt out of a too vehement oppoſition of their error, who aſſert them to be ſtrictly and properly meritorious, we ſhould imagine them to be of no uſe at all, or of very ſmall moment, in relation to our eternal happineſs, it will be proper to ſhew in the

Second PLACE, that, notwithſtanding what has been ſaid hitherto by way of abatement of their pretended worth, they are ſtill in many reſpects highly valuable before God; and that tho' they cannot by way of purchaſe procure for us, yet upon other conſiderations they will ſecure to us, eternal happineſs; for that there is a ſenſe in which the righteouſneſs of God is engag'd to remember and reward them; ſince otherwiſe he would not be unrighteous, tho' he ſhould forget *our works, and labour, that proceedeth of love*; which yet our Apoſtle, in the words of my text, doth more than intimate he would be.

NOW the leaſt that can be ſaid concerning the value of good works, proceeding from the love of God, and deſign'd to his glory, is this; that tho' we ſhould not be made partakers of eternal happineſs merely becauſe of them, yet neither can we be ſav'd without them: tho' they are not the meritorious cauſes, yet they are the neceſſary conditions, of our ſalvation: tho' where they are found, they do not give a legal title to ſalvation; yet where they are not found, the perſons deſtitute of them have not ſo much as an equitable title to eternal bliſs from the mercy of God, thro' the merits of Chriſt: tho' the performance of them doth not, for its own ſake, open unto us the gates of heaven; yet the non-performance of them will certainly ſhut thoſe gates upon us, and make an entry thither utterly impracticable: tho' the fruition of God is not due to any one for the ſake of his holineſs; yet ſure we are, that *with-* Matt. 7. 21. *out holineſs no one ſhall ſee God*: tho' the doing of God's will cannot purchaſe to us the kingdom of heaven; yet we are by Chriſt aſſur'd, that *none ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of his Father, which is in heaven.* For virtuous and religious actions are the way chalk'd out by God, by which we muſt arrive at *the glories which ſhall be reveal'd*: they are the means ordain'd by him, by which we may certainly and effectually, tho' not of right acquire, yet in fact obtain, everlaſting happineſs As ſure as we are that we ſhall be puniſh'd for our ſins, ſo ſure are we that we ſhall be rewarded for our piety; and tho' puniſhment be the effect of God's juſtice, and naturally reſults from it, whereas the reward proceeds merely from his bounty; yet ſince the goodneſs of God is as aſſential an attribute of the divine being as is his juſtice, it is no more poſſible that thoſe who do well, and perſevere in ſo doing, ſhould fall ſhort of eternal happineſs, than it is that thoſe, who continue in a ſtate of ſin and impenitence, ſhould avoid eternal miſery.

THE method, by which God will proceed in the final diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments, is plainly ſet down in holy Writ; and tho' we cannot from thence gather, that there will be an equality between good actions and their recompence, for we are taught every where that the recompence ſhall far exceed the work; yet we are ſufficiently inſtructed, that there ſhall be a proportion of likeneſs between the recompence and the work, that is, that it ſhall go well with them that do well, and Rom. 2. 6, &c. ill with them that do ill; and that in this ſenſe *God will render to every man according to his deeds*; *to them who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life*; *but to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath*; *tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doeth evil: but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good.* Death is in juſtice due to them that live after the fleſh; life, it is true, is not of ſtrict right due to them that live after the Spirit; and yet theſe may be as ſure of life, as thoſe are of death; for from the Rom. 8. 13. ſame authority that we believe, that *if we live after the fleſh, we ſhall die*, we have equal ground to believe, that *if we through the Spirit do mortifie the deeds of the body, we ſhall live* When St. *Paul* would powerfully perſwade the *Romans* to reſcue themſelves from the dominion of ſin, and to enter into the paths of holineſs, he ſhews them the different ends, to which theſe different courſes did naturally tend; and tho he is careful to diſtinguiſh between the demerit of ſin and the merit of holi- Rom. 6. 23. neſs, for he expreſly affirms that *death is the wages of ſin, but that eternal life is the gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*, yet the force of his argument turns upon this, that everlaſting life would be as certainly the fruit and end of holineſs, as eternal death would be the fruit v. 19, 20, 21, 22. and end of diſobedience. *As ye have yielded your members ſervants to uncleanneſs, and to iniquity unto iniquity*; *even ſo now yield your members ſervants to righteouſneſs unto holineſs*: *For when ye were the ſervants of ſin, ye were free from righteouſneſs*; *what fruit had ye then in thoſe things whereof ye are now aſham'd? for the end of thoſe things is death. But now being made free from ſin, and become ſervants to God, ye have your fruit unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life.*

THAT there is, tho' not an exact equality of worth, yet ſome proportion of fitneſs between pious actions and the rewards of piety, is plain from thoſe apt ſimilitudes, which the Scriptures ſo often make uſe of to repreſent to us the relation and affinity they bear to each other. The inſpir'd writers compare good and evil works to the ſeveral ſorts of ſeeds, eternal happineſs and miſery to the ſeveral fruits or products that naturally grow from them; *Whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap: for he that ſoweth to the fleſh, ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption; but he that ſoweth to the ſpirit, ſhall of the ſpirit reap life everlaſting.* Gal. 6. 7, 8. The harveſt which is reap'd doth, as to the quantity of it, far exceed the ſeed which is ſown: this wonderful encreaſe is owing, not ſo much to the skill of the husband-man, or to the goodneſs of the ſoil, as to the influences of heaven; yet ſtill there is ſome proportion between what is ſown and what is reap'd: where there is no ſeed ſown, there no harveſt can be expected; where the ſeed is ſown with too ſcanty an hand, there it will be in vain to look for a fruitful crop; and tho' it is *God, that hath given it a body as it hath pleas'd him,* 1 Cor. 15. 38. yet ſtill *he giveth to every ſeed its own body.*

AGAIN, eternal life is in holy Scripture ſometimes compar'd to a prize or crown; good works to the courſe which is to be run, the fight which is to be fought, in order to our gaining ſuch prize. *I have fought a good fight,* 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8. ſaith St. *Paul, I have finiſh'd my courſe, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous judge ſhall give me at that day.* The crown laid up for St. *Paul* did, in its weight and value, far exceed the labour and pains he was at in maintaining the good fight, in finiſhing his courſe, in preſerving the faith; but ſtill it was the recompence of his unſhaken firmneſs, his unwearied diligence, his ſteady perſeverance. It was a crown of righteouſneſs; the purchaſe of Chriſt's righteouſneſs, and the reward of St. *Paul*'s; it was to be given to him by a righteous judge; by one, who, tho' he was not in juſtice bound to give it him as a debt which St. *Paul* could challenge, yet in faithfulneſs would give it him as a donative which he had freely promis'd, and therefore would certainly beſtow.

BUT good actions are in Scripture moſt frequently compar'd to a task and labour enjoyn'd by God to be perform'd by men; and eternal life to a recompence promis'd by God, and by him paid to men in conſideration of their labour and their work. Now tho' the reward promis'd by God doth far exceed the value of the work requir'd from men, yet thoſe labourers, who, in proſpect of the promis'd recompence, do cheerfully perform that eaſie ſervice, which is requir'd from them, may be as ſure of receiving their reward, as if their labour were truly commenſurate to it, and were ſtrictly worthy of it. Nay, the Scriptures do go ſo far, as to pronounce the Saints of God to be in ſome ſenſe worthy of that recompence, which God in his tranſcendent bounty hath been pleas'd to promiſe to them. *To thoſe in Sardis, who had not defil'd their garments,* Rev. 3. 4. that is, who had preſerv'd their innocence without ſpot and blemiſh in the midſt of a wicked world, Chriſt promiſes that *they ſhould walk with him in white,* that is, that they ſhould be made partakers of his glory: *for they are worthy*; worthy, tho' not ſtrictly and on account of their own proper merit, yet in a larger ſenſe, becauſe they had thoſe diſpoſitions and qualifications, which Chriſt requir'd in ſuch as he would tranſlate to the kingdom of heaven.

Since therefore it appears from what hath been ſaid, that there is between the good works of holy men and eternal life, tho' a vaſt and infinite diſparity as to their worth, yet ſome ſort of agreeableneſs and relation as to the dependence the one hath upon the other; ſince there is the ſame affinity and connection between them, as between ſowing and reaping, between the ſeed and fruit, between the conflict and the victory gain'd thereby; ſince there are no other means of obtaining heaven than by an holy life and virtuous actions, and ſince theſe are ſure and certain means of obtaining happineſs; ſince there is a neceſſary and inſeparable connexion betwixt virtue and happineſs; ſince grace is, in the very nature of things, the beginning of glory, and glory is nothing elſe but the full conſummation of grace; ſince it is agreeable to the goodneſs, to the wiſdom, to the majeſty, and to the bounty of God, to promiſe eternal life upon the conditions ſpecified in the Goſpel, and impoſſible for him to be worſe than his promiſe, ſo as not to grant it upon the due performance of thoſe conditions; in this ſenſe, and in theſe regards, we may ſafely appeal to the righteouſneſs of God for a recompence of our virtuous actions; and as ſure as we are that *God is not unrighteous*, that is, as ſure as we are that God is God, ſo ſure we may be that he will not *forget our works, and labour that proceedeth of love*.

It ſeem'd neceſſary to ſettle our notions right concerning this matter, that we might not thro' miſtake either with the *Romaniſts* over-rate, or with ſome deluded *Sectaries* depreciate, the value of virtuous and religious actions. If there were any Religion in the world, which more promoted true and real holineſs, and propos'd ſtronger motives to acts of piety and charity, than that Religion which we profeſs doth; if any communion of Chriſtians laid down firmer principles of obedience to the laws of God, and gave better reaſons for our *living godly, ſoberly, and righteouſly in this preſent world,* than that communion doth of which we are members, a perſon who had a true zeal for the honour of God, and for the good of mankind, and who hath obſerv'd what a great ſtreſs is every where in Scripture laid upon an holy and virtuous life, would be tempted to go over to ſuch a Church; and tho' he found it overſpread with many errors in ſpeculation, would bear with them, if at the ſame time he found that it gave better encouragement to the practice of holineſs. And at firſt ſight it may ſeem, that that Church preſſes the neceſſity of good works fartheſt, which teaches them to be the meritorious cauſes of our ſalvation, and tells us that we may ſatisfie God for our ſins, and purchaſe heaven by them. But when we come to conſider, that this merit is uſually aſcrib'd only to ſome ſorts of good works, ſuch as faſting, alms, celibacy, and the like; and that, in order to ſuperſede the neceſſity, and compound for the want, of other Chriſtian graces; and that, when this meritoriousneſs of good works comes to be explain'd, and made out, it either means no more than we allow, who diſclaim all merit; or if it is carried higher, is without all warrant from Scripture or from reaſon; we ſhall then be entirely ſatisfied, that no ſtronger motive can poſſibly be us'd for the performance of any duty, than that which is urg'd by the Apoſtle in the text, and that which in all practical diſcourſes never fails to be urg'd by thoſe of our Church, that ſuch duty is by God made a condition of our eternal happineſs, and that we cannot fail of being by him abundantly rewarded for it. They who expect eternal life as a recompence of their holineſs, which God in his mercy

mercy hath freely promis'd them, have as well-grounded an aſſurance of it, as they who pretend it is a debt, which they may of right challenge, and conſequently have as powerful a motive as the other to be *holy in all manner of converſation.* Let this motive therefore, which is in it ſelf ſo ſtrong, operate ſtrongly and effectually upon us: let it excite in us a cheerful obedience to God's laws, and an uniform unwearied obſervance of all the precepts of the Goſpel. Be our diligence never ſo great, yet the reward which we expect is ſtill greater; be the warfare in which we are engag'd never ſo painful, yet the crown, which is laid up for us at that day, will abundantly compenſate all the toil and labour that are ſpent in the acqueſt of it. Begin we never ſo early to work in God's vineyard, and tarry we there never ſo long, yet we need not grudge our pains, becauſe we ſerve a good and gracious maſter, *whoſe reward is with him, to give every man* in proportion *according to*, but in value much above, *his work*. Of which ample reward that we may be all partakers, God of his infinite mercy grant thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

SER-

SERMON LV.

Preach'd on Chriſtmas-day.

JOHN. I. 11.

He came unto his own, and his own receiv'd him not.

THESE words are part of the Goſpel of this day, and of St. *John*'s character of the *Meſſias*. The ſubject, of which the Evangeliſt here treats, is ſublime and myſterious; but the ſtyle, in which he writes, is plain, eaſie, and expreſſive. Never was ſo much divinity compris'd in ſo few words; never were ſo abſtruſe myſteries plac'd in ſo clear a light. What the truths deliver'd are the meaneſt capacities may, with due attention, readily perceive; but a full and adequate comprehenſion of theſe truths is above the reach of the moſt exalted underſtanding. The divinity of the *Meſſias* even *he that runs may* here *read*; but how he, who was from all eternity God of God, ſhould in time be born of a woman and made man, the moſt profound Theologiſt may not pretend to explain. If therefore St. *John* hath ſeem'd to ſome obſcure, and difficult to be underſtood, it is not becauſe he writes darkly, but becauſe he reveals to us that *light, which no man can approach to.* His Goſpel is very plain and inſtructive; he delivers his doctrines clearly and diſtinctly, and writes not to amuſe but to inform. Thoſe hereticks therefore, who in former ages, or in our own times, have denied the God-head of our bleſſed Saviour, have been forc'd to uſe great art in evading the authority of this Evangeliſt. They will allow no myſtery in the doctrines which he teaches, but find a great deal in his manner of expreſſing them. They compliment our reaſon highly, when they make it the ſole judge of matters of faith; but they affront it as much, when they impoſe upon us abſurd, incongruous, irrational expoſitions of a plain John 1. 1. text. *In the beginning was the Word*, ſaith St. *John*; when the Baptiſt began to preach, then was Chriſt, who was afterwards the revealer of God's word, ſaith the *Socinian*. *And the Word was with God*, ſaith the text; this interpreter of God's Word was at firſt known to God only ly, ſaith the comment. *And the Word was God*, ſaith the Evangeliſt; John. 1. 1. the interpreter of God's word had power given him from God to preach ſalvation to men, ſaith the new-goſpeller. *All things were made by* v. 3. *him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*, ſaith the Scripture; the Goſpel was preach'd by him, and without him was not any part of the Goſpel preach'd which was preach'd, ſaith the deceiver. This is not to interpret Scripture, but to pervert it; and theſe men do not learn of St. *John* what Chriſtians are to believe, but teach him how an Apoſtle ought to ſpeak. At this rate of expounding, all the articles of our faith, all the practical doctrines of Scripture may with eaſe be eluded. But the fancies of theſe men have not been fruitful enough to carry this perverſe way of interpretation thro' the whole Goſpel; when they have ſecur'd their own opinion, and diſtinguiſh'd away the divinity of their Saviour, then St. *John* is allow'd to write intelligibly, and they are content to underſtand him as do all other readers. The words immediately before my text, in which it is ſaid that *Chriſt made the world*, they have ſufficiently examin'd and tortur'd; v. 10. but the text it ſelf, becauſe they do not think it bears hard upon any of their darling tenets, hath eſcap'd the rack and inquiſition. Having no occaſion therefore to vindicate it from any falſe gloſſes, I ſhall, as briefly as may be, ſhew what is meant by theſe words, and what uſe we may make of them.

In the words we have a plain account of theſe two matters of fact, the coming of our Saviour, and his ill reception. *He came unto his own*, theſe words expreſs his advent; *and his own received him not*, theſe ſhew the manner of his entertainment. In the former we have the greateſt miracle of love, which the world ever ſaw ſince God created *Adam*; in the latter we have the fouleſt prodigy of ingratitude, which the world ever produc'd ſince *Adam* rebell'd againſt his Maker. Now ſince every act of kindneſs on the one ſide, and of ingratitude on the other, is greater or leſs according to its ſeveral circumſtances; and ſince in meaſuring actions of this ſort, no circumſtances are of more weight, than the dignity of the perſon who offers a kindneſs, the value of the benefit offer'd, and the character of thoſe to whom it is offer'd; we ſhall be better able to judge, both of the exceeding love of him that came, and of the monſtrous ingratitude of thoſe who receiv'd him not, if we enquire into theſe circumſtances;

1. Who it was that came.
2. What was the benefit of his coming.
3. Who the perſons were to whom he came, and of whom it is here complain'd, that *they receiv'd him not*.

1ſt Who it was that came: *He came unto his own.*

If we carry our eyes back to the preceding verſes, we ſhall find that the perſon here ſpoken of was the eternal Son of God; *the Word which was in the beginning*, before all ages; *the Word*, which in the ſame beginning *was with God*, co-eternal with the Father; *and the Word* which *was God*, with the ſame Father in all divine attributes co-equal; the Almighty creator of heaven and earth; *for by him were all things* Col. 1. 16. *made*; *things in heaven, as well as in earth*; *inviſible as well as viſible*; *thrones and dominions, principalities and powers*; beings which never ſinn'd, as well as ſinful men; things incapable of regeneration, and

therefore not regenerated, but in a proper ſenſe created; not made anew,
but made.

If we take his character from the Prophets, who ſaw him at a diſtance,
Iſaiah 9. 6, 7. we find him diſtinguiſh'd by the glorious titles of *Wonderful*
Counſeller, the mighty God, the everlaſting Father, the Prince of
peace; *of the increaſe of whoſe government there ſhall be no end.* If
we enquire of the Baptiſt, who that *Lord* is, for whom he bids us to
John 1. 23. *prepare the way, and to make his paths ſtraight*, he denies not, but
v. 27. openly profeſſeth, that *he who is coming after him is preferr'd before him,*
v. 29. *whoſe ſhooes latchet he is not worthy to unlooſe.* This he tells us *is the*
Son of God; *this the lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the*
world. If we would be inform'd of his honour and grandeur from the
Rev. 5. 11. holy angels, we have the teſtimony of *ten thouſand times ten thouſand,*
v. 5. *and thouſands of thouſands*, that this *Lion of the tribe of Judah*,
v. 12. this *root of David*, this *Lamb* of God *is worthy to receive power, and*
riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength; and that to him belongeth *bleſſing,*
and honour, and glory, for ever and ever. If we will believe his own
teſtimony of himſelf, he hath thus characteriz'd himſelf to St. *John* the
c. 1. v. 8. diſciple of his boſom; *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the*
ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come. Or if we expect
that God ſhould ſpeak from the clouds, and bear witneſs to him;
Matt. 3. 16, 17. *Lo, the heavens are open'd, and the Spirit of God deſcends like a dove,*
and lights upon him; *and behold a voice from heaven, ſaying, this is my*
beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleas'd. Such being the glory of him
that came, ſuch the dignity of him that was to be receiv'd, we may
Pſal. 24. 9, 10. well beſpeak his reception in the words of the Pſalmiſt, *Lift up your*
heads O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlaſting doors, and the King
of glory ſhall come in. Who is the King of glory? Even the Lord of
hoſts, he is the King of glory. Infinite muſt be the condeſcenſion, if he,
who is *God above all, bleſſed for ever*, vouchſafes to viſit man; more, if
poſſible, than infinite muſt be the ingratitude, if proud *duſt and aſhes* vouchſafe
not to receive their God. But neither is this love more to be magnified,
or this ingratitude more to be aggravated, from the dignity of
the perſon who came, than from the greatneſs of his mercy in coming.
I proceed therefore, in the

2*d* Place, to ſhew in what ſenſe Chriſt is ſaid to have come, that we may be the better able to judge of the benefit of his coming.

Now it is certain, that he who is here ſaid to have come, had in
ſome ſenſe always been preſent. *The Word*, which *was in the beginning*,
was from the beginning, as God, ſo omnipreſent. Chriſt in his divine
nature was always every where, and there was no neceſſity of his
coming, that he might be preſent any where. *He, who filleth all*
things both in heaven and earth, doth not leave the heavens, that he
may be preſent upon earth. Chriſt therefore was not then firſt preſent
when made fleſh, but then firſt viſible; and is therefore ſaid then to
John 1, 5. have come, becauſe he then appear'd. *The light* had always *ſhone in*
darkneſs, but *the darkneſs comprehended it not*; he, by whom *the*
world was made, had always been *in the world, but the world knew*
it not. But when the fulneſs of time was come, then this *Word* put
v. 14. on *fleſh*; then, ſaith the Evangeliſt, *he dwelt amongſt us, and we beheld*
his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of
grace and truth. When therefore the Word became incarnate; when
he dwelt amongſt men, being himſelf made man; when his glory was

openly

openly and viſibly beheld, then is Chriſt ſaid to have come. But beſides this, the Scriptures give us another notion of Chriſt's coming, to which his being born in the fleſh was preparatory. As Chriſt is now ſtil'd ὁ ἐρχόμενος he that is to come, in reſpect of his laſt coming to judgment; ſo before his incarnation was he expected by God's people under the ſame character of ὁ ἐρχόμενος, he that was to come as the *Meſſias*. *When* the *Baptiſt had heard of the works of Chriſt, he ſent two of his* Matt. 11. 2, 3. *diſciples, and ſaid unto him, Art thou he that ſhould come, or do we look for another? Art thou he that ſhould come,* that is, art thou the promis'd and expected *Meſſias*? For ſo it is evident our Saviour underſtood the queſtion, ſince he proves that he was ὁ ἐρχόμενος, he that was to come, by ſuch indications as prov'd him to be the *Meſſias*: *Jeſus an-* v. 4, 5. *ſwer'd and ſaid unto them, Go and ſhew John again thoſe things which ye do hear and ſee. The blind receive their ſight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleans'd, and the deaf hear; the dead are rais'd up, and the poor have the Goſpel preach'd unto them.* When therefore Chriſt declar'd himſelf to be the promis'd *Meſſias*; when he preach'd his Goſpel, and offer'd ſalvation unto them that would believe; when the only begotten Son, which was in the boſom of the Father, began to declare his Father; then is Chriſt ſaid to have come. What therefore was the love of Chriſt incarnate, what the mercy of *Jeſus* in preaching his Goſpel, and becoming our Saviour; ſuch was the love, ſuch the benefit of Chriſt's coming. And now who is *able to comprehend what is the* Epheſ. 3. 18, 19. *breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge? Who can expreſs the noble acts of the* Pſal. 106. 2. *Lord, or ſhew forth all his praiſe?* What tongue of men, or angels, can diſplay the ineffable mercy of *God manifeſt in the fleſh to deſtroy the works of the devil?* Who hath gone down to the nethermoſt parts of hell, that he may declare to us the unſufferable torments, from which we are by Chriſt's coming deliver'd? Or who that has been caught up to the higheſt heavens, will reveal to us thoſe unutterable joys, to the participation of which we are by the ſame coming of Chriſt admitted?

THE *good tidings of great joy*, which the Goſpel brought *to all people*, was news worthy the meſſage of an Archangel; and *a Saviour born, Chriſt the Lord*, was a theme fit to employ the ſongs of a numerous hoſt of heaven. How warm were the old Patriarchs with the expectation of the promis'd *Meſſias*? The good *Father Abraham rejoyced to* John 8. 56. *ſee this day* of the Lord, *and he ſaw it, and was glad*. How were the ſouls of the Prophets enlarg'd; how were they ſwallow'd up in rapture, when, in their holy viſions, they ſaw this *ſun of righteouſneſs ariſing* Mal. 4. 2. *with healing in his wings! How beautiful*, ſaith the Prophet *Eſay*, *are* Iſai. 52. 7. *the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publiſheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publiſheth ſalvation, that ſaith unto Sion, thy God reigneth!* How charming is the eloquence of this ſublime writer, when he excites the ſons of *Iſrael* to a joyful acknowledgment of their redeemer! *Break forth into joy, ſing together ye waſt places* v. 9, 10. *of Jeruſalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeem'd Jeruſalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the world have ſeen the ſalvation of our God. Awake, awake, put on thy Strength, O Sion; put on thy beauti-* v. 1, 2. *ful garments, O Jeruſalem, the holy city. Shake thy ſelf from the duſt; ariſe, and ſit down; looſe thy ſelf from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion.* Nor are theſe the expreſſions of an over-heated imagination,

gination, or pious addreſſes to our paſſions only; but the coming of a Saviour is a benefit, which will bear the teſt of the cooleſt reaſon, and give a firm foundation to the moſt ſolid and rational joy. There is implanted in our natures ſuch an unconquerable averſion to miſery, ſuch an unlimited deſire of happineſs, that everlaſting ſalvation is a benefit of which we cannot be inſenſible. A change from captivity to liberty, from death to life, from miſery to glory, is a mercy which doth not more deſerve, than it commands our acknowledgment. No man who knows what the terrors of damnation are, can be ſo fond of them, as not to be deſirous to eſcape them; none, who knows what the word Saviour implies, can refuſe to receive him with the utmoſt extaſies of delight and gratitude. Joy and torment, heaven and hell, are not empty words, but real things; and we can no more be indifferent about theſe weighty and momentous concerns, than we can ſhake off the firſt elements of our being, and ſprings of all our actions and paſſions. Self-love is a principle we can never get rid of; it ſticks cloſe to our nature; its impreſſions are deep and lively, and its plea ſuch as will be heard, and will not be over-rul'd. The Goſpel therefore muſt be welcome, becauſe it brings the tidings of joy, which is always welcome; and man, if he duly conſiders, if he acts as a man, cannot but love his Saviour, becauſe he cannot but love himſelf.

HAVING hitherto conſider'd the dignity of him who came, and the benefit of his coming, I proceed, in the

3*d* PLACE, to ſhew who thoſe were to whom he came; *he came unto his own.*

BY *his own* are here meant the people of *Iſrael.* The Lord had Pſal. 135. 4. from the earlieſt ages *choſen Jacob to himſelf, and Iſrael for his peculiar inheritance.* Very many and very great are the privileges, which St. Rom. 9. 4, 5. *Paul* aſcribes to this choſen people. *To them pertain'd the adoption, and the glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the ſervice of God, and the promiſes: theirs were the fathers, and of them, as concerning the fleſh, Chriſt came.* They therefore had all theſe titles to be ſtil'd more eſpecially *his own*: theirs was *the adoption,* and therefore they might plead the right of ſons: theirs was *the covenant,* and by virtue of that covenant God was to be their God, and they were to be his people: *to them the law was given,* and this law was to Gal. 3. 24. be *their ſchool-maſter to bring them to Chriſt*: they were the heirs of 2 Cor. 1. 20. *the promiſes,* and had therefore a peculiar right to him *in whom all the promiſes are yea and amen.* From them Chriſt deriv'd his lineage, and they were therefore moſt properly *his own,* ſince he was *bone of their bone, and fleſh of their fleſh.* They were his, becauſe he was born amongſt them; and they were his, becauſe he was peculiarly born for them: for he was ſent by the Father, and the Apoſtles were ſent by Matt. 10. 6. him, *to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael.* The Goſpel was firſt offer'd to the *Jews,* and not, till their obſtinate rejection of it, preach'd to Acts 13. 46. the *Gentiles. It was neceſſary,* ſaith St. *Paul* to the contradicting and blaſpheming *Jews, that the Goſpel ſhould firſt have been ſpoken to you; but ſeeing ye put it away from you, and judge your ſelves unworthy of* Rom. 11. *everlaſting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* The *Jews* were *the na-* v. 15 *tural branches,* which were to be cut off before the wild *olive-tree* v. 12. could be *graffed in. The caſting away of them was to be the reconciling of the world, and the diminiſhing of them* was to be *the riches of the Gentiles.* This is that great myſtery, which St. *Paul* the Apoſtle

of

of the Gentiles could not contemplate without the higheſt expreſſions of an holy awe and admiration: *O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom, and knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!* Rom. 11. 33. It is evident therefore that the *Jews* had the firſt and beſt title to Chriſt, and that the Heathens came in upon their failure. They were the legal heirs of the kingdom of God, and the entail was to be cut off before we could inherit. To them Chriſt *came* as unto *his own*; but they, who were thus in a peculiar manner *his own, receiv'd him not.*

WHICH is my ſecond general expreſs'd by the Evangeliſt in theſe words, *but his own receiv'd him not.*

CHRIST came to the *Jews* under the notion and character of their promis'd and expected *Meſſias*; as one who was prefigur'd in their types; who was the ſubſtance which was ſhadow'd in their ceremonies; and who was foretold in thoſe *oracles of God,* which were committed to their care and cuſtody. He came to them as a Prophet, who was to declare the full and perfect will of his Father; as a Prieſt, who was to make an atonement for their ſins; as a King, who had an unqueſtionable right to their obedience. But they diſown'd his miſſion and his doctrines, and thereby rejected him as a Prophet; they treated him as a malefactor, one who ſuffer'd for his own ſins, and not for the ſins of others, and conſequently diſown'd him to be a Prieſt; they crown'd him indeed, but it was with thorns; they put a ſceptre into his hands, but it was by way of contempt; *they bow'd the knee before him, and ſaid, Hail King of the Jews,* Matt. 27. 29. but it was with ſcorn and deriſion; they publiſh'd his title in all languages, *This is Jeſus the King of the Jews*; but this was done, not in recognition of his right, but in a bold and outrageous defiance of his ſovereign authority. Becauſe his kingdom was not carnal, but ſpiritual; not ſuch as they moſt deſir'd, but ſuch as they moſt wanted; becauſe the law, by which he propos'd to rule them, did not ſuit with their vicious appetites; becauſe he came, not to ſubdue their enemies, but their luſts; to reſcue them, not out of the power of the *Romans*, but from the dominion of their ſins; becauſe he did not promiſe to advance them to places of dignity and offices of ſtate, but diſpens'd to them heavenly graces, and invited them to diſtant and ſpiritual rewards, they could not reliſh a kingdom of this refin'd nature; *they caſt his laws behind their back*, refus'd the deliverance which he offer'd, and exerted their utmoſt power and malice to prevent the beginning and firſt ſettlement of that kingdom, of which their Prophets had told them *there ſhould be no end.* Tho' their whole religion, in which they had been educated, and for which they pretended ſo warm a zeal, had reference to him; tho' in every minute circumſtance of his birth, his life, and his death, he punctually anſwer'd the types that had preſignified, and the propheſies which had foretold him; tho' he prov'd his miſſion from their own authentick witneſſes, and confirm'd this proof by doing ſuch things, as no man before ever did; yet their prejudices and their luſts were ſo ſtrong, as to over-power all conviction; *ſeeing they* would *not ſee, hearing they* would *not hear*; Matt. 13. 14. but that their ingratitude might bear proportion to his love, they, in whom he challeng'd a peculiar right, as moſt properly *his own* on ſundry accounts, denied him to be theirs in any regard, and therefore *receiv'd him not.*

NOW what was before ſaid to magnifie his mercy in coming, will, upon a review, equally aggravate their guilt in *not receiving him.* By how much the more eminent was the dignity of his perſon, by ſo much the more unpardonable was their inſolence, who offer'd ſuch deſpight to the Lord of glory. Whatever conſiderations enhance the value of the benefit by him vouchſaf'd, the ſame equally heighten their contempt, who with ſcorn *rejected ſo great ſalvation*. By how much the relation between him and them was nearer and more intimate, by ſo much the more unnatural was their barbarity towards him. God petitions man that he would accept of ſalvation, and this petition is by man rejected. Chriſt ſelects the *Jews* as a choſen and peculiar people, and is himſelf caſt off by them as a reprobate. He prefers them before the angels; and they look upon him as *the very ſcorn of men, and outcaſt of the* Philip. 2. 7. *people*. *He empties himſelf, and takes upon him the form of a ſervant*; Iſai. 53. 2. and they, for whoſe ſake he is thus humble, complain that *there is no form nor comelineſs in him*; *and that when they ſee him, there is no beauty that they ſhould deſire him*. He offers to them glory and immortality; and the returns they make to him, are death and ignominy. The meſſage which he brings, is *Peace upon earth, and good will towards men*; and the ſalutations which he hears, are *crucifie him, crucifie him*. In ſhort, his coming was not more unwelcome to the prince of darkneſs whom he came to ſubdue, than to thoſe wretched ſouls whom he came Marc. 1. 24. to redeem: *What have we to do with thee, thou Jeſus of Nazareth*, was the language as well of the *Jews* as of the devil.

WHAT hath been ſaid, however lamely and imperfectly, is yet ſufficient to make us ſenſible of the ingratitude of the *Jews*. We, who profeſs the name of Chriſt, are eaſily warm'd with an holy zeal againſt that rebellious people, who offer'd ſo many and ſo great indignities to our Lord and Saviour. We cannot reflect on Chriſt's love to them without the deepeſt wonder, nor think on their enmity to him without the keeneſt reſentment. There is none of us, who condemns not the malice and obſtinacy of the *Jews*; none of us, who thinks not thoſe, who rejected their Saviour, unworthy of ſalvation. All the tears, which St. *Peter* at his repentance ſhed, will ſcarce excuſe him to us for denying his Maſter: and as for *Judas* who betray'd his Lord, we without relenting condemn him to the deepeſt abyſs of torment. We are perſwaded, that had we been in the place of the *Jews*; had Chriſt came to us, as he did to them, we ſhould willingly have receiv'd him. What profound reverence would we have ſhewn to his holy perſon? With what cheerfulneſs would we have receiv'd *the glad tidings of ſalvation*? Had we then liv'd, Chriſt ſhould have had no reaſon for that bitter com- Matt. 8. 20. plaint, that *the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had neſts, but the ſon of man had not where to lay his head*. Had we been in their ſtead, we would gladly have receiv'd him into our houſes, into our arms, yea, into our very hearts. Theſe are the fond imaginations, with which we flatter our ſelves concerning our love to Chriſt; but as we cannot mock him, ſo neither ſhould we deceive our ſelves. There are ſurer ways of examining our love and regard to him; for Chriſt doth come to us as truly and effectually, tho' not exactly in the ſame way and manner, as he did to the *Jews*; and it will want but little reflection, provided we are ſerious and ſincere in our enquiry, to know how we have receiv'd him.

Heb. 1. 1, 2. GOD *who at ſundry times, and in diverſe manners, ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son*, ſaith the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews*. Nor did Chriſt ſpeak only in thoſe days, when he perſonally, upon earth, appear'd to his Apoſtles, but he ſtill ſpeaks to us in theſe laſt days by the holy Scriptures. All the actions, and all the ſufferings of Chriſt are there plac'd before us in the cleareſt light; we are made ſpectators of his ſpotleſs example, and hearers of his ſaving doctrine; he there invites us by his promiſes, warns us by his threatnings, directs us by his precepts, convinces us by his miracles, and inſtructs us by his marvellous wiſdom. Chriſt is, to all intents and purpoſes of his coming into the world, as plainly manifeſted to us in his Word, as he was to the ſenſes of thoſe, with whom he liv'd and convers'd; and we therefore, as well as they, are in a capacity of gladly receiving, or inſolently rejecting him. Their rejection of him conſiſted, not only in their contempt of his perſon, but in their diſobedience to his word; our reception of him therefore muſt be expreſs'd by our diligent hearkning to his word, and by our faithful obedience to his commandments. Tho' we *call him Lord, Lord*; yet if we do not the things which he ſaith, we plainly diſown him to be our Maſter. *He comes* unto us, as *unto his own*, by name and profeſſion; but tho' he *ſtretcheth forth his hands* unto us, as he did unto the *Jews*, we, like them, *a diſobedient and gainſaying people, receive him not*. Rom 10. 21.

And as Chriſt is preſent to us of this age by his Word, ſo alſo is he by his Miniſters. *We are embaſſadors for Chriſt*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *as tho' God did beſeech you by us*; *we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconcil'd unto God*: that is, we come not to you of our own authority, but as authoriz'd and commiſſion'd by Chriſt; it is not we who beſeech you, but God who beſeeches you by us: *we pray you* indeed, but we pray *in Chriſt's ſtead*; nor do we beg of you to *be reconcil'd to God* in our own name, but in the name of him, who hath *reconcil'd the world unto himſelf, and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation*. This was the language of the firſt Preachers of the Goſpel, this the claim which they made to an honourable reception from thoſe to whom they were ſent. The unworthy miniſters of the Goſpel in theſe later ages of the Church boaſt of no ſuch immediate miſſion, as had the Apoſtles; but whilſt, by authority deriv'd from them, they preach the ſame Goſpel which the Apoſtles preach'd; whilſt, in diſcharge of their truſt, they preach not themſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, and themſelves ſervants for Jeſus-ſake; whilſt they *corrupt not the Word of God*; *but as of ſincerity, but as of God, in the ſight of God they ſpeak of Chriſt*, they may without too much preſumption hope, that tho' they are unworthy of reception for their own ſakes, they may yet be receiv'd for the ſake of that Jeſus whom they preach. They who thus receive the miniſters of Chriſt, as his miniſters, receive him; they who reject thoſe whom he hath ſent, incur the guilt of the *Jews*, and tho' Chriſt *comes unto them*, they *receive him not*. 2 Cor. 5. 20. v. 19. 2 Cor, 2. 17.

But farther, Chriſt doth alſo come unto us, and expects to be receiv'd by us, in his holy ſacrament. That ſame body and blood, which Chriſt at his coming into the world took for us, he doth in a real, tho' incomprehenſible manner, by the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper conſign to us. Some of the earlieſt writers of the Church have aſſerted the truth of Chriſt's preſence in the ſacrament in ſuch full terms, that they have been miſtaken by the ignorant, and traduc'd by deceivers, as if they had maintain'd the abſurd and monſtrous doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation. The truth of Chriſt's preſence we with all antiquity readily embrace; the groſs notion of a corporal change of ſubſtance, is what we with other

Reform'd Churches deſervedly reject. Chriſt doth in the ſacrament as effectually preſent himſelf to us, as he did in perſon to the *Jews*. That ſalvation, which our Saviour, at his firſt preaching the Goſpel, offer'd to all believers in general, he here applys to each faithful and devout communicant in particular. If therefore there be any, who being invited to this Table of the Lord, obſtinately refuſe to come; or if any preſume to come without due reverence and preparation, theſe alſo incur the guilt of which the *Jews* are accus'd in my text; for to theſe alſo Chriſt comes and theſe are ſo far from receiving him as they ought, that by the one ſort he is utterly neglected, by the other openly defied.

AND now let us briefly recollect what hath been ſaid. We have conſider'd the exceeding love of Chriſt's coming, and the foul ingratitude of thoſe who receiv'd him not: we have found the one worthy of all men to be ador'd, and the other worthy of all to be deteſted. We have conſider'd how Chriſt doth alſo come to us, and how we may be chargeable with the ſame guilt of not receiving him. Wherein therefore we judge the *Jews*, let us not *condemn our ſelves*: Let us not *think that if we judge them who did ſuch things, and do* our ſelves *the ſame, we ſhall eſcape the judgment of God. If God ſpar'd not the natural branches, take we heed leſt he alſo ſpare not us. Becauſe of* not receiving him *they were broken off, and we ſtand*, whilſt we do ſtand, by our receiving him: let us *not be high-minded, but fear*. It is not baptiſm, nor an outward profeſſion, which will diſtinguiſh the Chriſtian from the *Jew*. He, who when Chriſt comes unto him in any of the ſenſes that has been mention'd, receives him not, whether he be of the circumciſion, or whether he be baptiz'd, ſhall, unleſs he repents, be reckon'd amongſt unbelievers. If therefore we would keep without the reach of this imputation, if we would not partake of the ſin, nor ſhare in the puniſhment, of that ſtiff-necked people, when Chriſt graciouſly comes unto us, let us not impiouſly reject him. Let us adore his mercy and condeſcenſion in vouchſafing to offer himſelf to us; and let us receive this welcome offer with joy and thankſgiving. If we are rightly prepar'd for a due reception of our bleſſed Lord, when he condeſcends to be preſent with us, we may be as firmly aſſur'd of his coming to us, and dwelling in our hearts by his Holy Spirit, as if we heard a voice from heaven, ſaying, *Surely I come quickly*. Let us accept the glad tidings with the alacrity and eagerneſs of the beloved diſciple, and ſay with him, in the tranſports of an holy joy, *Amen, even ſo, come, Lord Jeſus*.

Rom. 2. 1, &c.

c. 11. 20, 21.

Rev. 22. 20.

TO whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore.

SER-

SERMON LVI.

Preach'd on Eaſter-day.

1 Pet. I. 3.

Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead.

THAT Jeſus Chriſt did truly riſe again from the dead; that he who was *put to death in the fleſh, was quickned by the Spirit*; that he was *declar'd to be the Son of God with power by the reſurrection from the dead*, is an article of our faith, which we all of us profeſs to believe, and by the firm belief of which we all hope to be ſav'd; and which therefore is not to be prov'd, but to be ſuppos'd, in a Chriſtian audience. I ſhall not therefore enter upon an argument, which, by ſo many ancient and modern apologiſts for the truth of our holy religion, has been manag'd with all poſſible clearneſs, and ſtrength of reaſoning. The teſtimonies of the truth of this fact have been with great niceneſs and accuracy ponder'd and examin'd; and, upon the moſt exact ſcrutiny, have been found to be in all reſpects ſuch as we may, without any ſuſpicion of being miſled, without any danger of being miſtaken, ſafely and entirely rely upon. All the objections that for the time paſt have been brought, and all that even for the time to come can be brought; all the cavils which ſcepticiſm and infidelity have ever yet rais'd, and all the exceptions which ſincere believers have been able, by the utmoſt ſtrength of their imagination, to fancy might poſſibly be rais'd, have been impartially weigh'd, and have appear'd, upon a fair and full trial, to be weak, groundleſs, and inſufficient. It hath been ſhewn that the witneſſes, upon whoſe report this fact was at firſt believ'd, were, by reaſon of their number, their skill, and their integrity, worthy of all credit; that they were neither capable of being impos'd upon in this caſe themſelves, nor willing had they been able, nor able had they been willing, to impoſe upon others; that they were not at all credulous in too haſtily believing what they aſſented to, without ſufficient

1 Pet. 3. 18.
Rom. 1. 4.

care to inform themſelves aright; nor imperious in exacting from others a belief of what they taught, without a clear and ſatisfactory proof of it; that their character is ſuch, that they would not have propagated the belief of a notorious falſhood, if they could; and that the nature and circumſtances of the fact were ſuch, that had it been falſe, they could not have made it be believ'd, if they would; that no motive can be aſſign'd which might induce them to affirm this fact, if they were not convinc'd of the truth of it; and that nothing leſs than an irreſiſtible conviction of mind, that they were under an indiſpenſable obligation to publiſh it, could have bore them up againſt all the difficulties they were ſure to meet with, and all the miſeries they were unavoidably expos'd to, by ſuch a publication; that no proſpect of worldly honour, advantage, or pleaſure, could put them upon ſpreading ſuch a report, which they could not but foreſee muſt neceſſarily expoſe them to the greateſt diſhonour, diſadvantage, and pain; that no matter of fact ever had, or could have, a more full, authentick, and irrefragable proof, than hath been made of the reſurrection of Chriſt; that other facts, which men readily give their aſſent to, are believ'd upon much leſs evidence than this; and that therefore, if any perſons reject a truth ſo well atteſted, it is not for want of ſufficient light, but from an obſtinate ſhutting their eyes againſt the light, that they may not ſee it.

But this, as hath been intimated, is a topick fitter to be enlarg'd upon in a diſcourſe fram'd for the converſion of infidels, than in one intended for the edification of the faithful; neceſſary, God knows, at ſome times to be treated of even in a Chriſtian country, where there want not thoſe who openly impugn that faith into which they were baptiz'd; but, as we ſhould in charity be willing to hope, unneceſſary and ſuperfluous amongſt thoſe who are met together on this ſolemn feſtival, not to be inform'd, or convinc'd, that Chriſt as on this day roſe from the dead; but with joy and thankſgiving, with hymns of praiſe, and euchariſtical triumph, to celebrate the memory, and to recogniſe the benefits of his reſurrection, and to enliven and ſtrengthen their own hopes of being rais'd again, from the aſſurance which God in *his abundant mercy* hath given us thereof *by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead.* Now the reſurrection of Chriſt is an infallible and undeniable proof of ours on theſe ſeveral accounts.

I. As it proves his veracity who hath plainly reveal'd unto us, that we ſhall be rais'd from the dead.

II. As it is a proof of the acceptance of that price, which he who is the meritorious cauſe of our reſurrection, laid down to procure our redemption from the grave.

III. As it is a proof of his power who is the efficient cauſe of our reſurrection.

IV. As it is an earneſt and pledge given us, a pattern ſet us, by him who is the exemplary cauſe of our reſurrection.

Of theſe I ſhall ſpeak in their order.

Of all the arguments that are brought for the proof of a reſurrection, that which is drawn from our Saviour's being rais'd from the dead, is both the ſhorteſt, and the fulleſt; the eaſieſt to be apprehended, and the moſt difficult to be withſtood. Thoſe reaſonings, that are by ſome ancient Fathers made uſe of to facilitate the belief of this article, are rather

ther illuſtrations of it, to make it better conceiv'd by thoſe who do already believe it, than arguments ſufficient to convince thoſe who doubt of it. Sleep is ſo appoſite an image of death, and waking of ariſing from the dead; the ſetting of the ſun anſwers ſo well to our being buried in the grave, and its riſing again hath ſo juſt a correſpondence to our riſing from the darkneſs of death, that ſome have repreſented our frequent awaking from ſleep, and the diurnal revolution of darkneſs and light, as plauſible arguments of our reſurrection from the dead. Now true it is, that theſe are fit and appoſite reſemblances of a reſurrection, and thoſe to whom this great article of our faith is reveal'd, may make a proper uſe of theſe images, by thinking of death as often as they either ſee the ſun ſet, or compoſe themſelves to ſleep; and by meditating on the reſurrection whenever they awake, or behold the day breaking forth. But thoſe to whom this doctrine was not reveal'd, tho' they perceiv'd very well the likeneſs there is betwixt death and ſleep; tho' they obſerv'd the viciſſitudes of day and night, and were aware of the analogy theſe had to life and death; yet they could not, or at leaſt they did not, collect from hence that men ſhould riſe from the dead. They were ſo far from making this inference, that on the contrary we find them complaining, that tho' the ſun ſet, and roſe again; tho' they ſlept, and awak'd out of ſleep; yet when the day of life was once ſpent, they were thenceforth to ſleep on for one long, perpetual, eternal night.

ALL the other arguments that ever have been, or ever can be brought from the principles of mere reaſon, in confirmation of this momentous point, are of no farther force than to prove a reſurrection not utterly impoſſible, or, at moſt, not very improbable; but are not of ſufficient, not indeed of any weight, to prove it undoubtedly certain. From the power of God it may be inferr'd, that he can raiſe the dead; from his other attributes it may, with ſome ſhew of reaſon, be gather'd that probably he may raiſe them; but from the Word of God only we can have a full and infallible aſſurance, that what he unqueſtionably can, and what peradventure he may do, that he certainly will accompliſh. Nor are all the proofs brought from revelation to confirm our faith in this article equally convincing; thoſe fetch'd from the Old Teſtament have not all that ſtrength and evidence, which ſhines forth with full luſtre in thoſe with which we are furniſh'd from the New; and, even amongſt the Goſpel proofs, this of our Saviour's reſurrection hath a ſingular weight and clearneſs above the reſt.

IT hath been diſputed by ſome, whether the *Jews* had any notices at all of a reſurrection. This diſpute, it is true, could never have been ſtarted by Chriſtians, had they paid that deference which they owe to the authority of our Saviour, who hath determin'd this point by proving the reſurrection againſt the *Sadducees* from the books of *Moſes.* But altho' this truth was reveal'd to the *Jews*, yet was it wrapp'd up in ſuch dark terms, that the very revelation it ſelf wanted to have the veil remov'd, which was caſt over it. Intimations of a future ſtate, and of a reſurrection from the dead, are ſcatter'd thro' ſeveral parts of the Old Teſtament; but then it muſt be acknowledg'd, that there are alſo ſome paſſages which, at firſt view, ſeem to overthrow what thoſe texts eſtabliſh; which carry with them in the firſt appearance a ſuſpicious meaning; and which, tho' they may be fairly reconcil'd with thoſe other paſſages which aſſert a future ſtate, yet require ſome deeper penetration, than vulgar readers are ordinarily endu'd with, to reconcile them. Thus, Job 19. 25, 26, 27. when we find *Job* with great ſolemnity aſſerting, that he *knows that his Redeemer liveth, and* that *he ſhall ſtand at the latter day upon the earth; and* that *tho' after his skin worms deſtroy his body, yet in his fleſh he ſhall ſee God*; that *he ſhall ſee him for himſelf, and* that *his eyes ſhall behold him, and not another, tho' his reins be conſumed within him*, we cannot rationally doubt of his firm and ſtedfaſt belief of a c. 7. 6, 7, 9. reſurrection; but yet, when the ſame *Job* declares, that his *days are ſpent without hope*; that his *life is wind*; and that his *eye*, that very eye which he ſaid ſhould behold his redeemer, *ſhall no more ſee good*; that *as the cloud is conſum'd and vaniſheth away, ſo he that goeth down to the grave ſhall come up no more*; theſe ſeemingly deſperate expreſſions might ſtagger a *Jew's* faith, as far as it was built upon *Job's* teſtimony, concerning the certainty of a reſurrection.

In the like manner, when holy *David* declares his hope, and diſtinguiſhes himſelf from ſenſual men, who live without any thoughts of Pſal. 17. 15. another world, by ſaying, *As for me, I ſhall behold thy face in righteouſneſs; I ſhall be ſatisfied, when I awake, with thy likeneſs*, we cannot well doubt, but that he look'd upon death only as a ſhort ſleep, and that he was aſſur'd of awaking again at the reſurrection. But Pſal. 30. 9. when the ſame *David* puts theſe queſtions to his Maker, *What profit is there in my blood, when I go down into the pit? Shall the duſt praiſe* Pſal. 88. 10, 11, 12. *thee? Shall it declare thy truth? Wilt thou ſhew wonders to the dead? Shall the dead ariſe and praiſe thee? Shall thy loving kindneſs be declar'd in the grave, or thy faithfulneſs in deſtruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark, and thy righteouſneſs in the land of forgetfulneſs?* When he ſeems to anſwer theſe queſtions in the negative, by Pſal. 115. 17. ſaying that the *dead praiſe not the Lord, neither any that go down in-* Pſal. 78. 39. *to ſilence*; that man is as *a wind, which paſſeth away and cometh not again*; theſe expreſſions of the *Pſalmiſt*, by an unconſidering and carnal *Jew*, might be thought to argue *David* as much an unbeliever of this weighty article, as the very *Sadducees* themſelves.

So again, when the Preacher *Solomon* doth plainly diſtinguiſh betwixt the body and the ſoul; when he goes back to the firſt origin of each, and leads us forward to the ſeveral portions which ſhall be allotted to them, in congruity to their reſpective originals; when he in ex- Ecclef. 12. 7. preſs terms declares, that *the duſt*, or the earthy and material part of us, *ſhall return to the earth as it was*; but that *the ſpirit ſhall return unto God who gave it*, we cannot deſire a more poſitive and direct aſſertion, if not of the reſurrection of the body, yet at leaſt of a future ſtate, and of the ſoul's immortality. And yet, when the ſame Preacher c. 3. 19. obſerves, that *that which befalleth the ſons of men, befalls beaſts, even one thing befalls them*; that *as one dieth, ſo dieth the other, yea, they have all one breath, ſo that a man hath no preeminence above a beaſt*; c. 9. 5. that *the living know that they ſhall die, but* that *the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward*; a voluptuary and ſenſualiſt, one who is reſolv'd to live like a beaſt, and therefore would be glad to die like one, may diſtort theſe ſeemingly looſe expreſſions of the Preacher, which are capable of a ſound and good meaning, to countenance his lewd and irreligious notions concerning our total extinction by death, and our being conſign'd by it to a ſtate of perpetual oblivion and utter annihilation.

It would be eaſie, if requiſite, to inſtance in ſeveral other paſſages of the Old Teſtament, which to a thoughtleſs and ſuperficial conſiderer might

might ſeem rather to weaken, than ſtrengthen, the credibility of a future reſurrection; which tho' they cannot, without great impiety, be brought to prove that this doctrine was not at all taught under the Law, ſince our Saviour in the Goſpel hath declar'd, that thoſe who denied it *erred, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God,* yet they do manifeſtly prove, that this truth was not ſo clearly reveal'd to the *Jews* in the Old Teſtament, as it is to us Chriſtians in the New; but that *our Saviour hath brought life and immortality to* at leaſt greater *light thro' the Goſpel.* What a learned *Phariſee* could attain to by the utmoſt reach of thought from his revelation, that each vulgar Chriſtian may *read, as he runs,* in almoſt every page of ours; what was darkly hinted in the Old Teſtament, is, in terms not capable of being miſunderſtood, declar'd in the New; what was here and there intimated in the books of the Law, is repeated and inculcated over and over again throughout the Goſpel; nor are there here any paſſages which may favour a contrary opinion, or counterpoiſe the weight of thoſe plain texts that are brought to prove this article. One who reads the writings of *Moſes* and the Prophets impartially, will be inclin'd rather to embrace, than to reject, this doctrine; but the moſt prejudic'd reader of thoſe Scriptures, in which are contain'd the truths reveal'd by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, cannot reject it, cannot be in ſuſpenſe about it, without denying the authority of the revelation. No words can be more expreſs and full, none can more clearly or more authoritatively declare to us the certainty of a reſurrection, than thoſe pronounc'd by our bleſſed Saviour; *The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves ſhall hear the voice of the Son of man, and ſhall come forth; they that have done good, unto the reſurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the reſurrection of damnation.*

Matt. 22. 29.

2 Tim. 1. 10.

John 5. 28, 29.

Now ſince the declarations of our bleſſed Saviour concerning the reſurrection of the dead are ſo plain and expreſs, that there can be no doubt concerning their import and meaning; ſince the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead is ſo irrefragable a proof of his divine miſſion and unqueſtionable veracity, that there can be no doubt concerning the truth and certainty of what he hath reveal'd; ſince he who promis'd to raiſe himſelf from the dead, promis'd alſo to raiſe us; and ſince we are infallibly aſſur'd, that the former promiſe hath in fact been long ſince verified, we cannot doubt but the latter will alſo, in God's appointed time, be ſurely accompliſh'd. The reſurrection of Chriſt is a foundation ſo ſtrongly laid, that no powers of hell ſhall ever be able to ſhake it; and upon the ſame bottom, as hath been ſhewn, our hopes of a reſurrection are built. Which hopes will appear to be ſtill the better grounded, if we conſider, in the

Second Place, that Chriſt is the meritorious cauſe of our reſurrection, for whoſe ſake we ſhall be rais'd from the dead.

When man had, by tranſgreſſing the laws of his Maker, forfeited that life which was at firſt beſtow'd upon him by the free gift of God, and which he held upon the tenure of his obedience, Chriſt was pleas'd to lay down his own life in order to reſcue loſt man from the power and dominion of death; and, in conſideration of that price paid by our Saviour at his death, and declar'd by his reſurrection to be accepted, God the Father did vouchſafe to releaſe the forfeiture, and to let thoſe, who muſt otherwiſe have ſuffer'd perpetual impriſonment, go free. This reſtoring of thoſe unto life, on whom the ſentence of death had been awarded and executed, altho' it be in reſpect of the perſons thus reſtor'd an act of God's mere bounty, yet was it procur'd for us at a great price, thro' the ſatisfaction of Chriſt; tho' therefore it be the free gift of God to us, becauſe no ways deſerv'd by us, yet is it granted in conſideration of the all-ſufficient merits of our Saviour. For the grace of God, and redemption by Jeſus Chriſt; the remiſſion of our ſins by the Father, and the expiation of our ſins by the Son; reſtoration to life freely granted to us, and by a valuable price purchas'd for us, muſt not be oppos'd to each other as contradictory and incompatible, but are taken together in the Chriſtian ſcheme as including and inferring one the other. One man had, by his diſobedience to the laws of God, brought death into the world; and this death, being once introduc'd, had ſpread its contagion thro' the whole race of mankind. Now what more proper atonement could be made for this ſin of diſobedience, than the moſt perfect obedience? What could be more congruous to the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, than that the benefits of this obedience ſhould be as extenſive, as the miſchiefs of that diſobedience; that as the former had redounded to the deſtruction, ſo the latter ſhould redound to the reparation, of all human nature? 1 Cor. 15. 21, 22. *For ſince by man came death, by man came alſo the reſurrection of the dead: for as in Adam all die, ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.* In which words we are briefly, but fully, inſtructed by whom that debt, which we all owe to deprav'd nature, was at firſt contracted, and by whom it was at laſt cancell'd; from what ſource that contagion of ſin and death, which hath ſpread it ſelf thro' all the generations of men, did firſt take its riſe; and who that high Prieſt is, who, when *wrath was gone out from the Lord*, and when that *plague was begun*, which, without a powerful interceſſor, muſt have gone on *conquering to conquer*, made an atonement for tranſgreſſors; ſo that altho' *the plague was* not thenceforth *ſtaid*, yet all thoſe who died of it, were to be again brought back unto life. To the demerits of one ſinful man we are taught to impute our death; to the merits of one ſinleſs man we muſt aſcribe the hopes of riſing again to immortal life.

HENCE is it, that St. *John* the beloved diſciple of Chriſt, who was honour'd with the cleareſt and brighteſt viſions of thoſe glories that are yet to be reveal'd to the Saints, but were long ſince reveal'd unto him; to whom the everlaſting doors of heaven were open'd, and before whoſe eyes the hidden things of the world to come were, as in a ſcene, marvellouſly diſplay'd, in that lively draught which he hath given us of the glories of heaven, and that beautiful repreſentation which he hath made of the employments, wherewith the inhabitants of thoſe regions are conſtantly taken up, and inceſſantly delighted, hath ſhewn us that the creation of us by the Father, which firſt put us into a capacity of enjoying the bleſſings of life either in this world, or the next; and the redemption of us by the Son, which reſtor'd us to life after we had forfeited it by ſin, are jointly and equally the ſubjects of their perpetual hymns and thankſgivings; that, as the benefits we receive from each are equally great, ſo the adorations paid by men and angels to each are equally profound; that the making us out of nothing, the beſtowing upon us our beings, and faculties, our birth, our life, all the enjoyments here upon earth, and all our capacities of bliſs in heaven, doth not give the Creator of all things a better title to the homage of his creatures, than the Redeemer of mankind hath to the worſhip of thoſe, whom he hath reſcued from the jaws of death, and brought back from the priſon

of

of the grave. For as the Father is pronounc'd *worthy to receive glory,* Rev. 4. 11. *and honour, and power,* becauſe *he hath created all things, and for his pleaſure they are, and were created*; ſo *the Lamb that was ſlain,* is c. 5. 12. proclaim'd alſo *worthy to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing*; becauſe *he was ſlain, and* Rev. 5. 9. *hath redeem'd us to God by his blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation.* Each ſeverally receives his due acknowledgments for the ſeveral mercies which each beſtows, and both joyntly ſhare the ſame common doxology, when *every creature, which is in heaven, and on* v. 13. *earth, and under the earth, and ſuch as are in the ſea,* are repreſented to us *ſaying, Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power be to him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb for ever.* Since therefore death was the conſequence of ſin; ſince Chriſt, by making an atonement for ſin, redeem'd us from death; ſince by riſing from the dead he manifeſted the acceptance of that price, which he laid down for our redemption; his reſurrection is in that regard alſo a ſufficient ground for our aſſurance of being rais'd from the dead.

We have a ſtill farther ground of this firm hope of a reſurrection, becauſe Chriſt is not only the meritorious cauſe, for whoſe ſake, and in conſideration of whoſe merits, men ſhall after death be made alive, but alſo the efficient cauſe, or author, by whoſe power and energy we ſhall be recall'd from death unto life.

Were there no mention in Scripture of the Son's raiſing the dead; were the exerciſe of this act of omnipotence no where in direct terms aſcrib'd to our Saviour; yet ſince whatever powers belong to the Father, do alſo belong to the Son; ſince *whatever things the Father doeth, theſe* John 5 19. *alſo doeth the Son likewiſe,* we might from this identity of the Father and Son, both in attributes and operations, ſafely infer the efficacy of the Son in raiſing the dead. But how eaſie and neceſſary ſoever this deduction is, we are not left to make it our ſelves, becauſe we find the reſurrection of the dead directly and expreſly aſcrib'd in the Word of God to the Son as well as to the Father. Our Saviour, who will not by any true Chriſtian be accus'd of aſſuming to himſelf more than his due, inſtructs us, that *as the Father raiſeth up the dead, and quickneth* v. 21. *them, even ſo the Son quickneth* or raiſeth *whom he will.* The power of thus quickning the dead is eſſential to him, as God coeternal with the Father, and was conferr'd upon him as man, in recompence of his ſufferings for us. The Father hath given him authority to execute judgment, becauſe he is the *Son of man*; and ſince thoſe, who are to be judg'd by him, are to be ſummon'd before him in order to their being judg'd; ſince they are to be call'd out of their priſons, before they can appear at the bar; ſince, tho' both quick and dead are to be judg'd, the dead muſt be quicken'd, before they can ſtand at the judgment-ſeat; therefore *the dead* are to *hear the voice of the Son of God, that hearing* it *they* v. 25. *may live.* And for this reaſon, when our Saviour had told the *Jews,* that the execution of judgment was inveſted in him *as the Son of man,* that they might not be ſurpris'd at his challenging to himſelf this power of judicature, he acquaints them that he was alſo cloath'd with the powers neceſſary to the exerciſe of that authority; *Marvel not at this;* v. 28,29. *for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves ſhall hear his voice, and ſhall come forth; they that have done good, unto the reſurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the reſurrection of damnation.* The angels are in Scripture repreſented as employ'd in raiſing the dead; but then they act only miniſterially, and in ſubordination to Chriſt; he authoritatively, as their ſovereign and commander; he gives out thoſe orders, which they put in execution: *He ſhall ſend his angels with a great ſound of a trumpet, and they ſhall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* And that we may not think this commiſſion reſtrain'd to the elect only, or that none ſhould be rais'd by Chriſt but thoſe who are rais'd to glory, we are inſtructed, that theſe reapers ſhall by him be employ'd in gathering the tares for the fire, as well as the wheat for the barn; *for the Son of man ſhall ſend forth his angels, and they ſhall gather together out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.*

Matt. 24. 31.

c. 13. 41, 42.

Rom. 1. 3.

SINCE therefore *Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, which was made of the ſeed of David according to the fleſh, is declar'd to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holineſs, by the reſurrection of the dead*; ſince *to this end Chriſt both died, and roſe, and reviv'd, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living*; ſince of the dead he cannot be Lord, unleſs he firſt raiſeth them up to life, in order to his ruling over them when reviv'd; evident it is, that the doctrine of our reſurrection hath a cloſe and inſeparable connexion with that of Chriſt's; ſo that if one be own'd, the other cannot rationally be denied; if either be rejected, the other cannot conſiſtently be maintain'd.

c. 14. 9.

BUT *Fourthly* and laſtly, The reſurrection of Chriſt is ſtill a farther, clearer, and more convincing proof of ours, becauſe he is not only the meritorious and efficient, but alſo the exemplary cauſe, or pattern and pledge of our reſurrection.

THE reſurrection of any one man proves a reſurrection in general to be poſſible; but the reſurrection of Chriſt proves the reſurrection of all men to be infallibly certain: for Chriſt did affirm of himſelf, that he would raiſe the dead, and, in proof of the truth of that aſſertion, he rais'd himſelf from the dead. There cannot therefore remain any room to doubt, whether he can make good that promiſe to us, after he hath already accompliſh'd in his own perſon, what he hath promis'd to fulfil in ours. Hath he rais'd up his own body out of the grave, and ſhall he not raiſe up ours alſo? Hath he effected what is more difficult, and can he want ability to do what is far eaſier? Did he in fact verifie what he told the *Jews* —— *Deſtroy this temple, and in three days I will raiſe it up*? And ſhall he, who rais'd up the temple of his own body when diſſolv'd, not be able to re-edifie our earthly tabernacles when faln down?

John 2. 19.

CHRIST *is riſen from the dead, and become the firſt-fruits of them that ſlept.* And as the firſt-fruits under the law were, tho' in themſelves but one ſingle ſheaf or handful, yet the earneſt of a compleat harveſt; ſo the reſurrection of our Saviour, which the Apoſtle, in alluſion to this cuſtom, ſtiles the *firſt-fruits*, is in the like manner a ſure pledge of the reſurrection of the whole race of mankind. *Chriſt being rais'd from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him*: nor hath it loſt its dominion over him only, but over us alſo; ſo that in regard to the entire conqueſt, which he as the captain of our ſalvation hath gain'd, we may all joyn in the triumphant ſong of St. *Paul, O death, where is thy ſting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, thro' our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* As ſtrong as death

1 Cor. 15. 20.

Rom. 6. 9.

1 Cor. 15, 55, 57.

death is, as great as its ſpoils have been; yet Christ hath by his own reſurrection given us aſſurance, that he eaſily can, and certainly will, bind this ſtrong conquerour, and ſpoil his houſe, and reſcue thoſe, whom he hath taken priſoners, out of his hands. We have his ſure promiſes declar'd to us by the mouth of his holy Prophet; *I will ranſom them* Hoſ. 13. 14. *from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy deſtruction.* And our reliance on theſe promiſes muſt of neceſſity be mightily ſtrengthned, and confirm'd, by Chriſt's own reſurrection from the dead. When therefore death approaches towards us, and ſhakes its dart at us, we may, ſupported by theſe hopes, with an holy confidence deſpiſe its threats, and may, with an undaunted courage and firmneſs of mind, ſpeak unto it in Mic. 7. 8, 9, 10. the words of the Prophet *Micah*; *Rejoyce not againſt me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I ſhall ariſe; when I ſit in darkneſs, the Lord ſhall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, becauſe I have ſinned againſt him, until he plead my cauſe, and execute judgment for me; he will bring me forth to the light, and I ſhall behold his righteouſneſs. Then ſhe that is my enemy ſhall ſee it; and ſhame ſhall cover her which ſaid unto me, Where is the Lord thy God?*

It were an uncomfortable reflection to dwell upon, that *by man came* 1 Cor. 15. 21. *death*, were we not infallibly aſſur'd, that *by man alſo ſhall come the reſurrection from the dead*; but now that ſad and unwelcome truth, that *in Adam all die*, is ſweeten'd and allay'd by this gracious and joy- v. 22. ful promiſe, that *in Chriſt all ſhall be made alive.* But then this promiſe, which carries ſo much comfort and joy with it to the good Chriſtian, will be a curſe inſtead of a bleſſing to thoſe who live and die in their ſins. Better were it for the hardned and impenitent to lie under perpetual impriſonment in the grave, than that they ſhould be fetch'd out thence only in order to judgment and execution; better that their bodies, when once diſſolv'd, ſhould for ever continue in a ſtate of diſſolution, than that their ſcatter'd particles ſhould be recollected and reunited to the ſoul, only to put the ſinner into a capacity of enduring the torments of hell to all eternity. For *when this corruptible ſhall* 1 Cor. 15. 54. *have put on incorruption, and this mortal ſhall have put on immortality*; when *death* and the grave ſhall have *deliver'd up the dead which* Rev. 20. 13, 14. *were in them*, and after that they themſelves ſhall be *caſt into the lake of fire*; when *death* it ſelf, in the language of the Apoſtle, *ſhall be de-* 1 Cor. 15. 26. *ſtroy'd*, then ſhall there be no releaſe to the condemn'd, no reſcue to the miſerable; but incorrigible ſinners ſhall be *reſerv'd in everlaſting* Jude 6, 7. *chains under darkneſs, and ſuffer the vengeance of* endleſs *fire*. Then ſhall the damn'd complain that life is reſtor'd and perpetuated to them *that are in miſery*, and breath *unto the bitter in ſoul.* Then ſhall they Job. 3. 21. *long for death, but it ſhall not come,* and they ſhall ſeek for it as for *hidden treaſures.* Then ſhall immortality be a curſe to wretched man, when life and ſenſe ſhall be indulg'd, only that he may be ſuſceptible of puniſhment; and God ſhall ſupport him in his being, that he may remain within the ſphere of almighty vengeance.

Let us not therefore, by our obſtinate and irreclaimable wickedneſs, defeat the gracious purpoſes of our bleſſed Saviour; let not that which was by him intended for our benefit be rendred, thro' our own default, the moſt heavy of God's judgments, inſtead of his greateſt mercy. As the reſurrection of Chriſt was a pattern of ours; ſo let it be exemplary to our ſouls, as well as to our bodies. *As Chriſt was*, as upon

Rom. 6.4. this day, *raiſ'd up from the dead*; *even ſo let us* from this day forward
walk in newneſs of life. Let thoſe vows of obedience, which we have
made this holy ſeaſon, and which we are now going to ratifie in the moſt
ſolemn manner at God's holy altar, and to ſeal with our Saviour's blood,
be religiouſly and conſcientiouſly kept thro' the remaining part of our
lives. Since *God the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, according to his
abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the reſurrection
of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead,* let us do nothing that may weaken
and diminiſh, let us do every thing which may ſtrengthen and en-
1 Pet. 1. 4, 5. creaſe that hope of *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefil'd, and
that fadeth not away, reſerv'd in heaven for* all thoſe *who are kept
by the power of God thro' faith unto ſalvation, ready to be reveal'd in
the laſt time.*

SER-

SERMON LVII.

Preach'd on Whit-Sunday.

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1 COR. 12. 4.

Now there are diverſities of gifts, but the ſame Spirit.

THOSE diverſities of gifts, which are here mention'd by the Apoſtle, were never diſplay'd in ſo plentiful a meaſure; that bleſſed Spirit, who is the author of theſe diverſe gifts, never manifeſted his power, his wiſdom, and his goodneſs in ſo open and ſenſible a manner, as on the day of Pentecoſt. Our Saviour, after his reſurrection, and before his aſcenſion, had directed his Apoſtles to go to *Jeruſalem*, and had promis'd that within a few days *they ſhould be baptiz'd with the holy Ghoſt*. Acts 1. 5. At the time and place appointed the holy Ghoſt did come. The prediction therefore of what no human skill could foreſee, and the completion of what no human power could effect, was a manifeſt proof of Chriſt's divinity. He had told them, that *he muſt go to the Father*, before *the Comforter could come to them*; John 16. 7. and that when he was gone to the Father, *he would then ſend the Comforter*. The Comforter did accordingly come unto them; there could not therefore remain any doubt upon their minds, but that Chriſt was now with his Father, and that the Comforter, who came unto them, was ſent by him. Chriſt before his aſcenſion commanded them to *go and teach all nations*; Matt. 28. 19. they could not ſucceſsfully teach all nations, without ſpeaking the languages of all nations; the gift of tongues is miraculouſly beſtow'd on them, to enable them to execute that commiſſion: they could not therefore any longer doubt, but that he, who had empower'd them to obey that command, had authority to give it; and what he had before told them they now found verified, *that he had all power given him in heaven and in earth*. v. 18. When he left them, he had promis'd to be *always with them*; v. 20. this promiſe, when it was firſt made, might very well ſhake their faith; but when the Holy Ghoſt came, they now experimentally found, that he who was in perſon taken from them, was by his Spirit ſtill with them.

Acts 1.6.

How neceſſary the miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt was for their inſtruction in the things of God, is evident from thoſe falſe notions they had concerning the nature of Chriſt's kingdom juſt before the ſending of this bleſſed Spirit. At the very moment that the Holy Ghoſt was by our Saviour promis'd to them, they diſcover'd their want of him by the queſtion they ask'd him, *Wilt thou at this time reſtore again the kingdom to Iſrael?* Nor was the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt more neceſſary for the removal of their prejudices, and the ſecuring them from all poſſibility of miſtake or error in preaching the Goſpel, than it was for the ſupport of their ſpirits, and for giving them that undaunted preſence of mind, that fearleſs and unſhaken courage, that contempt of every thing terrible to fleſh and blood, which were requiſite to qualifie them for an effectual diſcharge of their miniſtry. They were now to be ſent into the world, in order to eſtabliſh the kingdom of Chriſt, and to deſtroy that of the Devil; they were to attack all the prejudices, and all the paſſions of men; they were, without force and without policy, to ſettle a perpetual empire, which was ſoon to extinguiſh all others, and was it ſelf never to be extinguiſh'd. In order to compaſs theſe great and glorious ends, there was occaſion for greater ſtrength than they before were maſters of; for greater courage, greater light, more abundant meaſures of grace, and a larger proportion of the Spirit of God. By the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt pour'd down on the day of Pentecoſt, the Apoſtles were then enabled to plant the Goſpel with expedition and ſucceſs; and by the ſame power from on high given to us, tho' in a more ſcanty meaſure, we are ſtill enabled to receive it with faith, and to obey it with cheerfulneſs. The gifts of the Holy Ghoſt were not confin'd to the day of Pentecoſt, or to the age of the Apoſtles; but ſome of his gifts are in all ages, and on every day, ready to be pour'd forth into the ſouls of all true believers. It is not therefore a matter of mere ſpeculation, but of near concernment to us, to employ our thoughts upon theſe gifts, and upon the giver of them; and of both theſe therefore I ſhall, thro' the aſſiſtance of the ſame Spirit, endeavour to ſpeak ſuch things as tend, not to amuſe and entertain the curious, but to inſtruct and edifie humble and ſober-minded Chriſtians. With this view I ſhall diſcourſe

I. Of that one Spirit, who diſpenſeth diverſe gifts to his Church.
II. Of thoſe diverſe gifts, which are by this one Spirit diſpens'd.

Now concerning the Spirit who diſpenſeth theſe gifts, we ought firmly to believe, what the Catholick Church hath always profeſs'd, what the holy Scriptures do either in expreſs words teach, or by undeniable conſequence imply, that he is one perſon of the undivided Godhead, with the Father and the Son in glory equal, equally the object of our praiſe, truſt, and adoration. The humble and devout Chriſtian is fully in his mind perſwaded, that the Holy Ghoſt proceeds from the Father and the Son, and that he is not begotten either by the Father or the Son, tho' the difference between proceſſion and generation he is not able to aſſign, or to conceive. We had not known any thing either of the generation of the Son, or of the proceſſion of the Spirit, had they not been reveal'd to us in the Word of God; and becauſe the difference of proceſſion from generation is not there reveal'd to us, we muſt be contented not to know it; and muſt think it unneceſſary, if not unbecoming,

coming, to enquire about it. Had not God deſign'd that we ſhould know and believe, that the Son is not the Holy Ghoſt, that the Holy Ghoſt is not the Son, we may be aſſur'd that no ſuch difference as this would have been mention'd in thoſe ſacred Writings, which were intended to be the rule of our faith: and had God deſign'd, that we ſhould know the preciſe difference betwixt the origination of the Son and of the Holy Ghoſt, we cannot doubt, but that in the ſame Scriptures this alſo would have been as plainly deliver'd. We may be told by ſome, who pretend to have div'd into the depth of theſe myſteries, that the difference between the generation of the Son and the proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt is the ſame, as that between the two faculties of our own ſouls, our underſtanding and our will; ſo that the Son iſſues from the Father, as wiſdom doth from the mind, who is therefore call'd *the wiſdom of God*; and that the Holy Ghoſt proceeds from the Father and the Son, as an act of love doth from a wiſe mind, who is therefore ſtyl'd in the writings of the learned, and thought to be term'd alſo in the Scriptures, *the love of God*. But ſince the Scriptures have not taught us any ſuch diſcrimination, we may be ſatisfied, that it can be no eſſential article of the Chriſtian faith. We may make uſe of ſuch reſemblances as theſe, to aſſiſt our thoughts towards the clearer conception of this myſtery, if we find that they do not rather confound than enlighten us; but we may be ſecure, that we ſhall not be condemn'd for not being ſubtle enough to underſtand, what perſons of greater abſtraction think they have clear and diſtinct notions of; or for not being obſequious enough to embrace, what they, without authority from the Word of God, are pleas'd to advance.

WHAT we find ſaid of this myſtery by thoſe pious and learned men, on whoſe skill and integrity we think we have good reaſon to depend, that we may ſuppoſe to be true from the opinion we have that they are not themſelves miſtaken, and that they would not knowingly lead us into errour; but what we find ſaid of it in Scripture, that we firmly, ſteadily, and heartily believe, becauſe we are ſure an omniſcient Being cannot err; and a Being of infinite holineſs and truth cannot deceive us. When therefore throughout the Scriptures we find perſonal actions attributed to this bleſſed Spirit; when we are taught by our Saviour, that *the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghoſt, whom the Father would ſend in the Son's name, ſhould teach the Apoſtles all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, which Chriſt had ſaid unto them*; when we read in the inſpir'd writings, that this *Spirit doth teſtifie of Chriſt*; that *the* ſame *Spirit ſearcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*; that he *ſeparated Barnabas and Saul for the work, whereunto he had call'd them*; that he *appointed overſeers over the Church of God*; that he performs all kinds of operations, and beſtows all ſorts of gifts, ordinary and extraordinary, upon the ſons of men; that *he gives to one the word of wiſdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another the gifts of healing*; that *all theſe worketh one and the ſelf-ſame Spirit, dividing to every man ſeverally as he will*: when we in the writings of the Apoſtles find this Spirit expreſsly diſtinguiſh'd from the gifts of the Spirit; when we are here told by St. *Paul*, that *there are diverſities of gifts, but one and the ſame Spirit*, who doth thus diverſifie them, and diſtribute them to ſeveral; when we do with ſincere, honeſt, and unprejudic'd minds read theſe paſſages, and others like theſe, in the holy Scriptures; when we regulate our belief by what we there read, and take

John 14. 26.
c. 15. 26.
1 Cor. 2. 10.
Acts 13. 2.
c. 20. 28.
1 Cor. 12. 8, 9, 11.

the Scriptures in that ſenſe, which they do upon the firſt reading naturally convey to our thoughts, and which, the more narrowly and cloſely we examine, we find ſtill more and more reaſon to embrace; we cannot form any doubt or ſcruple, but that the bleſſed Spirit, who is thus ſpoken of as real perſons are wont to be ſpoken of; to whom ſuch actions are aſcrib'd, as do not uſe to be aſcrib'd to any but perſons; and of whom the like things are ſaid, as are ſaid of the Father and the Son, is as properly a perſon, as is the Father or the Son. For can any impartial thinker John 14. 16, 17. conſider that gracious promiſe of our Saviour; *I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth,* and can he perſwade himſelf that the Father, to whom Chriſt pray'd that *he would ſend another Comforter*, is a perſon; that he, who prays to the Father to ſend another Comforter is a perſon; and yet, that this other Comforter ſent by the Father, thro' the interceſſion of the Son, is not a perſon, but a quality; not the giver of comfort, but the gift; not another Comforter beſides the Father and the Son, but the conſolation beſtow'd by the Father on believers, at the requeſt of his Son?

A MODEST and ingenuous Chriſtian will not think himſelf at liberty to force a ſenſe upon the Scriptures, which they will by no means bear; but will embrace them in that ſenſe, which to him they manifeſtly appear to intend: he will not teach the inſpir'd Writers what they ſhould have deliver'd, but will with reverence receive what they plainly have deliver'd; he will think and ſpeak of this bleſſed Spirit no other things than what the Holy Spirit himſelf, who guided the Penmen of Scripture, hath taught him to think and ſpeak. He cannot therefore with the *Socinian* conceive the Holy Ghoſt to be a mere quality, whom thoſe, who ſpoke as they were mov'd by the Holy Ghoſt, do every where deſcribe as a perſon; nor dares he with the *Arian* or *Macedonian* to affirm him to be a mere creature, whom he finds rank'd by the Scriptures with the Father, and the Son; and whom therefore he believes to be partaker of the ſame divine eſſence. For he finds the ſame titles given to the Holy Ghoſt, as are due only to God; the ſame attributes aſcrib'd to him, as are peculiar to God; the ſame works done by him, which can be perform'd by none but God; the ſame worſhip paid to him, which, without idolatry, can be paid to none but God; and therefore he cannot doubt, but that he, to whom theſe diſtinguiſhing titles are in Scripture given, theſe peculiar attributes are aſcrib'd, theſe divine works and offices are aſſign'd, this incommunicable worſhip is paid, muſt be properly and truly God. Into the name of the Holy Ghoſt, as well as of the Father and the Son, he was at his admiſſion into Chriſt's Church baptiz'd; and having thus dedicated himſelf to the Holy Ghoſt, as well as to the Father and the Son, he dares not but pay him the ſame homage, honour, and adoration. From the Holy Ghoſt, as well as from the Father and the Son, he expects the benedictions of heaven; and he cannot therefore doubt Rom. 9. 5. but he, by whom he is thus bleſs'd, is *God above all bleſſed for ever.* 1 Cor. 3. 16. He knows, that his body is therefore ſaid to be the *temple of God*, becauſe *the Spirit of God dwelleth in him*; and ſince it would be ſacrilege to build a temple to any creature, he cannot queſtion but that he is truly God, to whom we do not our ſelves erect a temple, but to whom we our ſelves are temples made by God. He hath been taught by his Matt. 12.31. Saviour, that *blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt is not to be forgiven in this world, nor in the next*: and he cannot conceive, how blaſphemy can be committed againſt any, who is not God; or how any blaſphemy againſt a creature ſhould be unpardonable, when ſome blaſphemies even againſt God himſelf are ſuch as may be forgiven. He finds *Ananias* accus'd by St. *Peter* for having *lied unto God*, becauſe *he lied unto the Holy Ghoſt*; and he is not able to comprehend, how a lie againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhould be a lie againſt God, if the Holy Ghoſt be not God. Againſt a truth ſo plainly taught in Holy Writ he may have heard that ſome cavils are rais'd; but he is ſatisfied that nothing is ſo plainly taught, but what may be diſputed againſt; and he dares not give up this article of his creed merely becauſe ſome, who call themſelves Chriſtians, are pleas'd to queſtion it, ſince the ſame reaſon would oblige him to renounce all the reſt. He may not be able to anſwer all the cavils that ſophiſtry hath ſtarted againſt this doctrine, and yet he may in his own mind be fully convinc'd that they are but cavils. He may obſerve ſeveral things attributed to the Holy Ghoſt in the Scriptures, which confeſſedly do not belong to a divine perſon; but he cannot fail to have obſerv'd alſo, that in the ſame Scriptures the Holy Ghoſt is ſometimes put for the gifts and graces, of which he is the author and beſtower; ſometimes for the perſon, from whom theſe gifts and graces are deriv'd. When therefore he finds the Holy Ghoſt ſpoken of as encreas'd or diminiſh'd; as pour'd out, diſtributed, or extinguiſh'd; as given out in different meaſures and proportions, to different perſons, in different ages of the Church; when he reads *that the Holy Ghoſt was not yet given, becauſe that Jeſus was not yet glorified*; ſuch paſſages as theſe he applies to the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, which are capable of encreaſe or diminution, of variety and change, of beginning and ending; and not to the giver of them, who is the ſame God, uncapable of any change; who always was, always will be, what he is; who never began to exiſt, never ſhall be extinguiſh'd. And this eaſie diſtinction, as it will ſolve thoſe difficulties, wherewith gainſayers have endeavour'd to perplex this truth; ſo will it challenge admittance with all pious believers, becauſe it is not arbitrarily invented by men, but plainly laid down in the Word of God, and particularly in the words of my text, where the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt are diſtinguiſh'd from the giver; ſo that the variety of the gifts doth no ways impeach the unity or identity of the giver: for *there are diverſities of gifts, but the ſame Spirit*; or, as it is ſtill more emphatically expreſs'd in the 11th verſe, where, after a ſpecial enumeration of theſe manifold gifts, it is ſaid, *All theſe worketh that one and the ſelf-ſame Spirit, dividing to every man ſeverally as he will.*

Acts 5. 3, 4.

John 7. 39.

WHAT thoſe diverſe gifts are, which are ſaid to be diſpens'd by the ſame Spirit, is the ſecond head I propos'd to ſpeak to.

MANIFOLD and various are the operations of the Spirit, which are reckon'd up by the Apoſtle here in this chapter; but it is not neceſſary to every Chriſtian that he ſhould know their preciſe number, or be able with exactneſs to aſſign thoſe differences, which diſcriminate the one from the other. The learned differ widely amongſt themſelves in the ſenſe, wherein they underſtand theſe diverſe operations of the Spirit; and it will be difficult for the ſimple and unlearn'd, amongſt ſuch a variety of interpretations as are brought, to determine which is the only true one. How *the word of wiſdom*, which *is given by the Spirit to one*, differs from *the word of knowledge*, which *by the ſame Spirit is given to another*; why theſe gifts are ſtyl'd *the word of wiſdom*, and *the word of knowledge*, and not barely wiſdom and knowledge; what

1 Cor. 12. 8.

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is preciſely meant by this wiſdom, and this knowledge; what thoſe perſons, who were endu'd with the one, were enabled to think, ſpeak, or do more than thoſe who were endu'd with the other, they, who have ſearch'd moſt into theſe niceties, do rather gueſs, than know: and tho' a modeſt enquiry into theſe matters may be commendable in thoſe, who have leiſure and skill to purſue it; yet can it not be neceſſary to thoſe, whoſe want either of time or learning renders them uncapable of ſuch reſearches.

COULD we not be ſav'd without poſſeſſing theſe gifts of the Spirit, they would have been deſcrib'd to us in ſuch plain characters, that we might certainly have known whether we were partakers of them; but ſince theſe gifts are not neceſſary for us to enjoy, neither is it neceſſary for us to have diſtinct apprehenſions of them. In thoſe firſt ages of the Church, wherein theſe gifts were common, the words, by which they were expreſs'd, were, in all probability, commonly underſtood; but ſince the things themſelves have long ſince ceas'd, it is no wonder, nor is it of any ill conſequence, that the terms, by which they are ſignified, cannot now be fully underſtood. It ſuffices the humble and ſerious Chriſtian to know, that the operations of the Spirit are ſome extraordinary, ſome ordinary: ſome ſpecial to ſome times, and ſome perſons; others common to all Chriſtians in all ages: ſome neceſſary for the firſt planting of the Goſpel, others requiſite to the ſpiritual growth of true believers: ſome miraculous gifts, by which thoſe who were furniſh'd with them, were qualified to promote the ſalvation of other men; others ſaving graces, by which thoſe, who are endu'd therewith, are enabled to *work out their own ſalvation*: the former ſuch, as we ought to thank God for having heretofore beſtow'd on the Apoſtles and firſt Preachers of the Goſpel, for the more effectual and ſpeedy propagation thereof; the latter ſuch, as we ought to pray to God to beſtow upon our ſelves, as neceſſary to diſpoſe our underſtandings rightly to apprehend, our wills cheerfully to obey, our affections duly to entertain, the ſaving truths and precepts of the Goſpel: the former not to be pretended to in theſe our days without enthuſiaſm, and fanaticiſm; the latter not to be neglected, wanted, or uncultivated by us, without hazard of our everlaſting ſalvation: the former, ſigns, whereby to diſtinguiſh true Prophets from falſe, perſons really commiſſion'd by God from arrogant pretenders to divine revelation; the latter, ſure characters, whereby to diſcern the regenerate from the unregenerate, the ſincere Chriſtian from the hypocrite, the real believer from the nominal, the ſpiritual perſon from the carnal, the child of God and heir of glory from the child of wrath and ſon of perdition.

THESE diverſe kinds of gifts are ſo diſtinct in their nature and uſe, that there is no Chriſtian of ſuch ſlender capacities, but that he can diſcern the difference of them. Every Chriſtian knows, that ſpeaking different tongues which he hath never learn'd, working ſigns and wonders, foretelling things to come, healing the ſick, and raiſing the dead, are not ſuch ſpiritual gifts as he is to pray for, to expect, or to covet; nor ſuch, as are neceſſary to entitle him to ſalvation: he knows alſo, that Gal. 5. 22. *the fruits of the Spirit*, which the Holy Ghoſt doth ordinarily produce in the hearts, and which ſhew themſelves in the lives, of all true believers, *are love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith*; that to exerciſe theſe virtues and graces is, in the language of Scripture, *to* v. 16. *walk by the Spirit*; and that thoſe only who are thus led by the Spirit

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of God, are the ſons of God. The former kind of operations of the Spirit, being ſuch as we are not immediately concern'd in, the devout and practical Chriſtian will not be over-curious to know the ſeveral ſorts of them; the latter kind of the operations of the ſame Spirit, being neceſſary to relieve the weakneſs and infirmities of our nature, and to aſſiſt and ſtrengthen us in the performance of our duty, he will think himſelf oblig'd to be better acquainted with, and will therefore bear us with patience, whilſt we dwell ſomething longer upon them.

Now he, who is not convinc'd of the abſolute neceſſity of God's grace to invigorate his obedience to the divine laws, muſt be a perfect ſtranger to himſelf, as well as to the Word of God; and muſt have been as careleſs an obſerver of what paſſes within his own breaſt, as of what is written in the holy Scriptures. When one gives himſelf leiſure to take a ſurvey of his own faculties, and obſerves how dark-ſighted he is in the perception of divine truths; with what reluctance he ſometimes chooſes what his underſtanding plainly repreſents to him as good, and refuſes what his own conſcience directly pronounces to be evil; how apt his affections are to rebel againſt the dictates of his reaſon, and to hurry him another way than he knows he ſhould, and, in his ſober mind, very fain would, go; when he ſets before his thoughts the great variety of duties commanded, and of ſins forbidden, and the perverſeneſs of his own deprav'd nature, which gives him an antipathy to thoſe duties, and a ſtrong inclination to thoſe ſins; when he reflects on the power, and cunning, and vigilance of his ſpiritual enemies, always alluring him to ſin, and ſeducing him from the practice of virtue; when he weighs with himſelf the neceſſity of practiſing every duty, and forſaking every kind of wickedneſs, in order to ſecure a good title to the promiſes of the Goſpel; when he takes a view of thoſe particular obſtacles which hinder him in the exerciſe of ſeveral graces, and of the ſtrong temptations which prompt him to the commiſſion of ſeveral ſins; when he conſiders the aptneſs of human nature to grow weary of performing the ſame things, tho' in themſelves never ſo pleaſant, and its ſtill greater diſpoſition to grow faint, when the actions continually to be repeated are burdenſom to fleſh and blood; when he compares the neceſſity of perſeverance with the difficulty of it, the prevalence of things preſent and ſenſible with the weakneſs, wherewith thoſe objects affect us that are abſent and ſpiritual; when, I ſay, a conſidering man puts all theſe things together, he cannot but be convinc'd, that *narrow is the path which leads unto* everlaſting *life*, and that without illumination from the Spirit of God he ſhall not be able rightly to diſcern it; that *ſtrait is the gate* which opens an entry into heaven, and that he cannot, by the force of his own natural ſtrength, without new power given him from above, and the ſecret influences of God's holy Spirit adding force and energy to his own endeavours, force his way thro' it. Conſcious therefore of his own weakneſs he will acknowledge the neceſſity of God's grace; and being ready to ſink thro' his own natural weight, unleſs ſupported by foreign help, he will cry out with St. *Peter*, *Save me Lord, or elſe I periſh.* Matt. 7. 14. Matt. 8. 25. c. 14. 30.

Some Philoſophers of old flatter'd the pride and vanity of men, by teaching them that they wanted nothing to make them virtuous, but only a firm and ſteady reſolution of being ſo; that this reſolution they themſelves were maſters of, and might exert at their own pleaſure. They confidently boaſted that their happineſs was a thing wholly in their own power; that they need not aſk of the Gods to be virtuous, nor conſe-

quently to be happy, ſince they could be ſo without their aid or concurrence, or even in deſpight of them. The *Pelagians* afterwards rais'd their hereſies upon the principles, which theſe heathen Philoſophers had firſt broach'd; they engag'd in the quarrel of deprav'd nature againſt divine grace: all our diſorders they would have to be the effects, not of ſin, but of nature; all our evil inclinations ſeem'd to them capable of being ſubdu'd by our own unaſſiſted reaſon; and they did not think the ſuccour of any ſupernatural grace neceſſary, either for the combating of vice, or for the maintenance of their integrity and virtue. But the ſober Chriſtian hath learn'd from the Scriptures to ſpeak and to think more humbly of himſelf, and more becomingly and magnificently of God; we
2 Cor. 3. 5. are there taught that *we are not ſufficient of our ſelves to think,* much leſs to do, *any thing as of our ſelves, but that our ſufficiency is of God*;
Phil. 2. 13. that *it is God, which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good plea-*
Rom. 8. 13. *ſure*; that it is *by the Spirit* we muſt *mortifie the deeds of the body,* if
Heb. 13. 21. we would *live*; that it is God, who by his Spirit *makes us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight.* The humble and devout Chriſtian being thus ſatisfied of the neceſſity of God's grace, both from his own experience and from the Scriptures, and being aſſur'd of the vital influences of this Spirit from the promiſes made to him in the Goſpel, will not be over-curious to enquire into the ſecret and unconceivable manner of its operation. He will chooſe rather to feel theſe influences, than to underſtand or explain them, and will not doubt of that power, which, tho' he cannot give an account of as to the manner of its working, he plainly perceives to be great and marvelous from its mighty and wonderful effects. For when, in reading the holy Scriptures, he finds the veil of darkneſs remov'd from before his underſtanding; when thoſe clouds of ignorance, that had over-caſt his mind, are preſently diſpers'd; when the doubts, under which he had for ſome time labour'd, are on a ſudden clear'd; when ſuch pious thoughts, as were wont to paſs tranſiently, are long dwelt upon, ſo as to leave behind them deep and laſting impreſſions; when theſe are ſuggeſted to him without his ſeeking, and are urg'd and preſs'd upon him ſo importunately, that he cannot chooſe but liſten unto them; when from a calm and ſerious conſideration of the ſtate of his own ſoul, the odiouſneſs and danger of ſin, the beauty and neceſſity of holineſs, he is led to make good and pious reſolutions of ſerving God with greater purity for the time to come; when he finds a ſudden impulſe upon his ſpirits rouſing him up to the performance of ſome important duty, which he had before neglected; or an unexpected check ſtopping him in the midſt of his courſe, when he is ruſhing on blindly and impetuouſly to the commiſſion of ſome heinous ſin; when in his devotions he finds his attention fix'd, his affections enflam'd, and his heart melted within him; when, whilſt the voice of God's miniſter preaching the ſaving truths of the Goſpel ſounds in his ears, he is ſenſible of an inward voice ſpeaking with greater force and efficacy to his ſoul, to his underſtanding, and to his heart; when under the preſſure of any grievous affliction, he feels unexpected joy and comfort; when *light riſes up in the* midſt of *dark-*
Iſai. 61. 3. *neſs*; when there is *given unto him beauty for aſhes, the oyl of joy for mourning, the garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs*; upon all theſe and the like occaſions he is ſenſible of the preſence and aid of God's Holy
2 Cor. 12. 9. Spirit, whoſe *grace* alone *is ſufficient* to all theſe purpoſes, and whoſe *ſtrength is* thus *made perfect in his weakneſs*.

How the operation of God's holy Spirit is conſiſtent with the freedom of our own wills; how far we are paſſive, and how far active in thoſe good thoughts, words, and works, which are wrought in us by the influence of this Spirit, the practical Chriſtian doth not much trouble himſelf to enquire. Whatſoever is good in him, that he devoutly aſcribes, not unto himſelf, but unto the grace of God; whatſoever is amiſs, that he imputes, not unto God, but to the perverſeneſs of his own will. When he doth any thing which is praiſe-worthy, he gives the glory of it unto God, who by his grace enabled him to do it; when he doth any thing which is evil, he takes the ſhame of it upon himſelf, as having either reſiſted the grace of God which was afforded him, or having by his former ſins juſtly merited to be left deſtitute and forſaken: in the former caſe he readily cries out with holy *David*; *Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name be the glory*; in the latter caſe he is as ready to make *Daniel*'s humble acknowledgment, *O Lord, righteouſneſs belongeth unto thee, but unto me confuſion of face.* He will leave it to others to diſpute about the nature, extent, and efficacy of this grace; and will make it his own chief labour and ſtudy how to obtain, to cheriſh, and to improve it. He ſtrives, according to the beſt of his judgment, to form right notions of its efficacy; but he is ſtill more ſollicitous, that no miſtakes in his opinions about it may have any dangerous influences upon his practice. He cannot be very wrong in his notions, whilſt he believes that man's will is neither ſo free, as without God's grace to do good: nor ſo enſlav'd, as not to be at liberty either to concur with, or to reſiſt, that grace: but whether theſe notions about a matter ſo intricate be exactly right or not, he is fully aſſur'd, that he cannot be miſtaken in his meaſures of acting, if he exerts his own endeavours with as much vigour and earneſtneſs, as if by them alone he were finally to ſtand or to fall; and at the ſame time implores God's grace with as much fervency, as if that alone could ſupport him: if he neither relies ſo far on his own ſtrength, as not humbly to acknowledge, that it is *God alone who works in him both to will and to do*; nor ſo far depends on the grace of God to ſave him, as to forget that he is requir'd to *work out his own ſalvation*: if laſtly, at his approaches to the holy altar, he doth prepare himſelf for the reception of the bleſſed Sacrament with as much care, diligence, and ſcrupuloſity, as if the benefits he there expects did entirely depend upon the diſpoſitions he brings along with him, and his own fitneſs to communicate; and yet at the ſame time, not truſting on his own imperfect righteouſneſs, but on God's infinite mercy, he doth there with faith, with humility, with reverence, addreſs himſelf to that bleſſed Spirit, who is the *giver of every good and perfect gift*, that he may be fulfill'd with his grace, and heavenly benediction.

Pſal. 115. 1.

Dan. 9, 7, 8.

Phil. 2. 12.

To whom, with the Father and the Son, be all honour, power, and glory, both now and for ever.

SERMON LVIII.

Balaam's Wiſh to die the death of the Righteous.

Numb. XXIII. 10.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.

WHATEVER difficulties or diſcouragements the wicked may find, or fancy, in ſetting about the work of righteouſneſs, they would all gladly participate of the recompence and reward of it; how unwilling ſoever they may be to live the life, they neither have, nor can have, any objection againſt *dying the death, of the righteous*; and tho' they may not perhaps any of them much care to ſpend the days of their youth and vigour, as the good man does, yet there is no one of them, but what muſt needs earneſtly and importunately wiſh, that *his laſt end may be like his*: a good wiſh, which even the worſt of men can ſcarce help making, whether they will or no. *Balaam*, we know, was far enough from being a good man; yet whilſt he was compell'd by an over-ruling providence to enumerate the bleſſings, which God had vouchſaf'd unto his choſen people; whilſt he was deſcribing the happineſs and the reward of the righteous, he falls of courſe, neceſſarily and unavoidably, into the moſt paſſionate expreſſions of the deſire that he himſelf had to have a ſhare in that happineſs. Whilſt his thoughts were rais'd, warm'd, and enliven'd with the clear view of the future bleſſedneſs of God's choſen ſervants, he could not ſuffer himſelf to go on any farther in his deſcription of that bleſſedneſs, until he had firſt made a ſtand, and deſir'd earneſtly that it might be his own. He had but juſt begun to reckon up the privileges of the righteous; he had mention'd only their external and temporal advantages, their wonderful encreaſe above other nations, and their being diſtinguiſh'd and ſeparated from them by God's peculiar favour; but he could not make an end of bleſſing them, till he had firſt declar'd how heartily he deſir'd that he might not be ſhut out from that bleſſedneſs, which he was there ſo elegantly deſcribing; he had no pa-

tience

tience to ſtay, till he could regularly and methodically connect this his deſire to the deſcription he was upon; but in the midſt of it abruptly breaks out into this paſſionate wiſh, which, by how much the leſs it is artful, is ſo much the more natural; *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.*

In ſpeaking to which words I ſhall not, becauſe I truſt I need not, urge any arguments to convince you how much every one is concern'd, both in point of duty and intereſt, to make *Balaam*'s wiſh his own, that he may *die the death of the righteous.* I ſhall rather chooſe to point out what are the proper qualifications of ſuch a death, and to conſider what we are to do, what is incumbent on us, and of neceſſity requir'd, that we may *die the death of the righteous,* and that our *laſt end may be like his.* Now the proper qualifications of a good death, *the death of the righteous,* are

I. Faith.
II. Hope.
III. Charity.
IV. A willingneſs to part with this world.

And *Firſt,* If we would *die the death of the righteous,* we muſt poſſeſs our ſouls with a ſtedfaſt and a lively faith in God.

He *that comes unto God,* ſays the Apoſtle, *muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* Heb. 11. 6. The only proſpect that can make death tolerable, is a firm expectation of everlaſting life after death; a privilege which appertains only unto thoſe who have that *faith in God, without which,* as the author to the *Hebrews* expreſly teaches us, *it is impoſſible to pleaſe him.* Thoſe who die in their ſins, can in no ſenſe be ſaid to *die the death of the righteous*; and in the 8th chapter of St. *John* our bleſſed Saviour informs us, that *they that believe not ſhall die in their ſins*; v. 24. and in other places of the ſame Goſpel, that *the wrath of God abideth on them*; and that *he that believeth not is condemn'd already.* A lively faith in God, and a ſtedfaſt belief of the Goſpel, and of all that is contain'd in it, is not only of uſe to ſupport us under the agonies of death, but is alſo abſolutely neceſſary to qualifie us for everlaſting life: and thoſe therefore, who have been at ſo much miſplac'd pains to prove that men may go to heaven without faith, have contributed all that in them lies to the eternal perdition of thoſe unhappy men, who have been ſo ſervilely wretched, as to embrace their impious tenets.

If the injury and affront that is offer'd to God, is what adds to the heinouſneſs and aggravation of any ſin, infidelity certainly muſt needs be very provoking in his ſight; ſince, as St. *John* inſtructs us, *he that believeth not God, maketh him a liar.* 1 John 5. 10. If the ſevereſt denunciations of future vengeance are ſufficient to convince us of the malignancy of any ſin, St. *Paul* hath told us, that *the Lord Jeſus ſhall be reveal'd from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon unbelievers, who ſhall be puniſh'd with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* 2 Theſ. 1. 7, 8, 9. If particular inſtances of vengeance, executed upon ſinners, are a proper proof to evince the heinouſneſs of any ſin, we may find almoſt all ſorts of judgments executed upon the *Jews,* becauſe they believ'd not: it was for this reaſon that *God ſware in his wrath, that they ſhould not enter into his reſt:*

it was *becauſe of unbelief*, that the whole body of them *were broken off*; as the Apoſtle expreſsly aſſures us in the 11th to the *Romans*, and the 20th verſe.

Since therefore infidelity will undoubtedly render men obnoxious to God's diſpleaſure, if we would qualifie our ſelves for ſuch a death, as is the diſtinguiſhing privilege of his faithful ſervants, we muſt be careful to keep at the utmoſt diſtance from this ſin; we muſt confirm, improve, and quicken our belief of all God's gracious promiſes; we muſt,
Eph. 6. 16. as the Apoſtle adviſes us, *take unto our ſelves the ſhield of faith, whereby we ſhall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*; where-
1 Theſ. 5. 8. by we ſhall overcome the world, and the prince of it; we muſt *put on the breaſt-plate of faith*, and for an *helmet the hope of ſalvation*, which is

The *Second* Qualification of a good death.

And certainly he who ſtedfaſtly believes in God, cannot well be ſuppos'd deſtitute of a lively hope in him: for there is a near reſemblance between theſe graces; and however they may in thought be diſtinguiſh'd, they cannot well in fact be ſeparated from one another. The weaker and the more imperfect our faith is, the fainter and the more wavering will be our hopes; and the more ſtedfaſtly we believe in God, the more confidently, the more aſſuredly, ſhall we truſt in him. For we therefore hope in God, becauſe we know and believe him to be a Being, upon whom we may ſecurely depend for a deliverance from all the evil which we either ſuffer or fear; and for the attainment of all the good which we can either deſire or enjoy. From the conſideration of God's omnipotence we muſt needs be ſatisfied, that it is in his power to make us perfectly happy; and from thoſe gracious promiſes that he hath been pleas'd to make us in the Goſpel, we may comfortably conclude, that that happineſs, which his power enables him to confer upon us, his goodneſs and his faithfulneſs will incline him to vouchſafe us. Theſe hopes thus grounded upon the power, the wiſdom, the goodneſs, and veracity of God, the ſincere Chriſtian may joyfully oppoſe againſt all the miſeries of life, and againſt all the terrors of death. No danger, no fear, no temptation can be of force enough to ſhake his reſolutions, whilſt his
1 Cor. 15. 19. confidence is in heaven, whilſt his hopes are in the Lord his God. If, indeed, *in this life only he had hope*, he would have reaſon to ſay with
Prov. 14. 32. the Apoſtle, that he was *of all men moſt miſerable*: *but the righteous hath hope in his death*, hath hope beyond it: and it is he alone who is entitled to this glorious privilege: there is no room, there is no poſſi-
Job 8. 13. 14. bility for the wicked to entertain any ſuch hopes as theſe. *The hopes of the hypocrite ſhall periſh, his hope ſhall be cut off, his truſt ſhall be a ſpider's web*.

If therefore we would *die the death of the righteous*, we muſt be careful to have our hope in that God, who only can ſupport us in that trying time of need; and if we would have this hope abiding in us, we
2 Cor. 7. 1. muſt *cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God*. For that hope which alone can qualifie us for a good death, muſt be founded upon God's gracious promiſes; and theſe are made only to ſuch as ſhall obey his commandments: we muſt
1 John 3. 4. be ſure that *our own hearts condemn us not*, if we would have this *confidence towards God*. And to this purpoſe we are inſtructed, in a very lively manner, in the 5th chapter of the book of *Wiſdom*, the 14th, 15th and 16th verſes. *The hope of the ungodly is like duſt that is blown away with the wind; like a thin froth that is driven away with the ſtorm;*

like as the ſmoke that is diſpers'd here and there with a tempeſt, and paſſeth away, as the remembrance of a gueſt that tarrieth but a day: but the righteous live for evermore; their reward alſo is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Moſt High. Therefore ſhall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand: for with his right hand ſhall he cover them, and with his arm ſhall he protect them. These ineſtimable promiſes are a firm foundation for a rational and well-grounded hope; and ſuch an hope is the inſeparable attendant upon an holy life, and the neceſſary qualification for an happy death.

THE *Third* Qualification of a good death is charity.

AND this is a qualification, the neceſſity of which moſt men, whatever they may have thought in their life-time, do at their death readily acknowledge. There are few tempers ſo unmerciful, ſo moroſe, and revengeful, but what appear compaſſionate, *gentle, and eaſie to be intreated,* upon the near proſpect of approaching death. The inexorable miſer is then uſually diſpos'd to beſtow ſome part of his uſeleſs riches upon the poor; and they, whoſe whole life hath been ſpent in envy, malice, and revenge, make ſo little difficulty of expreſſing an univerſal charity, and love, and good-will to all men, that it would almoſt look like a breach of charity to think, or ſay, that they had ever been envious, malicious, or revengeful. But it were to be wiſh'd that what all men find ſo neceſſary at their death, they would more eaſily be perſwaded to practiſe in their life. A death-bed charity, tho' by no means to be diſcountenanc'd or diſcourag'd, muſt yet be allow'd to fall infinitely ſhort of the much greater merit of a life ſpent in acts of mercy and charity. For ſurely it muſt be much the greateſt ſatisfaction to a dying man, to be able to ſay that he gave his money to the poor, when he might have ſpent it upon himſelf; that he was kind and beneficent to all, when he had the power, as well as the will, to do them good; and that he generouſly forgave his offending brother, even then, when the injury was freſh upon his mind, and he might have had the opportunity of revenging it. Charity hath a preſent reward annex'd to it, there is an unſpeakable ſatisfaction that goes along with it, even whilſt we are performing it; but this ſatisfaction never makes ſo ſtrong impreſſions upon us, is never of ſuch mighty comfort and ſupport to us, as it is in the day of danger and diſtreſs, in the time of ſickneſs, and at the hour of death.

IF therefore we would *die the death of the righteous,* we muſt be eminent for that charity, which is the diſtinguiſhing character of the righteous; if we would entitle our ſelves to God's mercy at a time when we ſhall ſtand in moſt need of his mercy, we muſt now, *as we have opportunity,* be merciful unto our brethren; if we would have God to *forgive us our treſpaſſes before we go hence, and be no more ſeen,* we muſt, whilſt we are here, forgive our brethren their treſpaſſes; if we would depart out of this world in the peace of God, we muſt be careful to *live peaceably with all men,* ſo long as we continue in it; if we deſire hereafter to be admitted to the aſſembly of *juſt men made perfect,* we muſt live conſtantly in the communion of Saints here; if we would be members of the Church triumphant in heaven, we muſt continue our ſelves members of the Church militant here on earth. And this certainly is an inſtance of charity, which, how little ſoever it be regarded by ſome men, deſerves our ſerious conſideration, and our ut-

Rom. 12. 18.

moſt care. For how willing ſoever we may be to hope charitably of thoſe otherwiſe good men, who have departed from the communion of the Church; how loath ſoever we may be to think, that they are peremptorily excluded from the benefits of Chriſt's death and paſſion; yet this however we may venture to affirm, that their condition is not ſo ſafe, whilſt they wilfully exclude themſelves from the communion of the Church, as whilſt they continue in it. We may not ſay, that by ſuch a with-drawing of themſelves they do certainly forfeit their ſalvation; but we may ſay that they act very uncautiouſly in putting it to ſo great an hazard. We will not aſſert that they have no title to the joys of heaven; but we may, we muſt, affirm, that they are not ſo well able to make out their title. They have not, they cannot have, the ſame evidences of it, the ſame comfort, the ſame ſatisfaction, and aſſurance, whilſt they rend the Church of Chriſt by their diviſions, as they might have, if they *kept the unity of* the Church *in the bond of peace.*

THE promiſes which Chriſt makes are made to his Church; the grace which he purchas'd and procur'd for his faithful ſervants, is applied and convey'd to them by the ordinances of his Church; the adminiſtration of theſe ordinances is by him, and his Apoſtles, committed to the Paſtors of his Church; the faith which is to be profeſs'd, the prayers and worſhip which are to be offer'd up unto him, are directed to be profeſs'd and offer'd in the unity and communion of his Church; and thoſe therefore who break themſelves off from this Church, who neglect theſe ordinances, who diſobey theſe Paſtors, who violate this unity, and deſert this communion, muſt ſurely be allow'd to be, at leaſt, in a more uncertain and dangerous condition, than they who live and die within the pale of the Church, in a conſtant attendance upon its holy ordinances, in a due ſubjection to its lawful Paſtors, and in a conſcientious conformity to its wholſom orders and directions.

MEN who have not been accuſtom'd to employ their thoughts upon this ſubject, may perhaps be tempted to look upon theſe things as nice and uſeleſs ſpeculations, and to think that a good life will be enough to carry them to heaven, whatever ſociety of Chriſtians they join themſelves to; yea, whether they are join'd to any ſociety, or no. But if they would diligently conſult the holy Scriptures, they would ſoon find, that our Saviour and his Apoſtles have laid greater ſtreſs upon this matter than they ſeem to imagine. The benefits which are reach'd out unto us in the Goſpel, are in the ſame Goſpel expreſsly ſaid to depend upon our being united unto Chriſt; and it will, I believe, be very hard for any private Chriſtian to aſſign any good proof of his being united to his Saviour, but by his continuing in the unity of his Church. And if they who make ſo ſlight a matter of the breaking of this unity, would be ſo kind to themſelves, as to continue in the communion of the Church, till they could find out a better proof of their being united unto Chriſt, we ſhould then, I am confident, have no reaſon any longer to bewail and lament, as we muſt now do, the unhappy breaches and diviſions of the Church. If it be ſaid that an obedience to Chriſt's commands is a ſufficient proof of our being united unto Chriſt, it may juſtly be replied that one part of that obedience which we owe him, is to hold communion with his Church: beſides, the very power of obeying him is expreſsly ſaid by him himſelf to depend upon our being united to him, and cannot therefore properly be alleg'd as the ſole proof of that union. For thus our Lord teaches us in the 15th chapter of St. *John*, the 4th and 5th verſes: *As the branch cannot bear fruit of it ſelf, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit.* That union, which is here expreſs'd and explain'd by the vine and its branches, is elſewhere ſet forth by the union that is between the head and its members. Thus in the firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, ch. 12. v. 12, 13. *As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; ſo alſo is Chriſt: for by one Spirit are we all baptiz'd into one body.* Now what St. *Paul* here calls the body, in his Epiſtle to the *Coloſſians* he expreſly calls the Church: ch. 1. v. 18. *He is the head of the body, the Church.* And therefore ſince they who cut themſelves off from the communion of Chriſt's Church, do thereby ceaſe to be members of his body, ſuch an act muſt, no doubt, very much impair, if not quite deſtroy, their union and communion with Chriſt.

Sure we are, the primitive Chriſtians were fully convinc'd of the neceſſity of continuing in the unity of the Church, and had very terrible apprehenſions of the unſpeakable danger of being excluded from its communion. Why elſe was there ſuch care taken that excommunicated perſons ſhould, at the point of death, be admitted to communion, that they might have the comfort of dying in the Church? Why elſe are we told by an eminent Father, and that not as his own particular judgment, but as the general opinion of all good Chriſtians in that age, that "none have God "for their father, but ſuch as have the Church for their mother"? I would not be willing to apply this ſevere cenſure, in the utmoſt rigour of it, to all thoſe who have cauſeleſly withdrawn themſelves from the communion of our Church; I would rather pity and pray for, than reproach or condemn them. But let us, who have the happineſs to be members of a truly primitive and Apoſtolical Church, be duly ſenſible of this valuable privilege, and make the proper uſe of it. Thoſe who die in her communion, if their lives have been of a piece with their profeſſion, may reſt aſſur'd that they *die in the Lord*; that they *die the death of the righteous*, and that their *laſt end is like his.*

The laſt thing I mention'd, as a proper qualification of a good death, is a willingneſs to part with this world.

And certainly he who hath poſſeſs'd himſelf of the qualifications I before mention'd, will be at little or no difficulty to make himſelf maſter of this. He who heartily and ſincerely believes the Goſpel, and hath led a life anſwerable to his belief, will be under little temptation of being inordinately fond of continuing in this preſent world. He hath always conſider'd himſelf here as a ſtranger and ſojourner in his way to a far better country; and is therefore, at all times, prepar'd to leave it with the ſame indifference, with the ſame cheerfulneſs, that a traveller does his inn. By the eye of faith he views death as a paſſage only to a better life: he hath no doubt upon him but that the ſtate he is now entring upon will be infinitely for his advantage; that he ſhall exchange pain for pleaſure, miſery for happineſs, ſlavery for freedom, wearineſs for reſt, earthly ſorrows for heavenly and everlaſting joys. The heathen indeed might well be allow'd to be uneaſie under the apprehenſion of death, becauſe he was ſo much at a loſs to know what would be his condition after it; but the Chriſtian, who hath a certain, clear, and diſtinct proſpect beyond the grave into another world, may eaſily, by the aſſiſtance of his moſt holy faith, ſupport himſelf under the thoughts of going thither.

Tho' death be the juſt judgment of God upon us for our ſins, and ſhould not therefore be deſpis'd by us; yet neither ought it immoderately to terrify and diſmay us: tho' we cannot, without ſome natural reluctance, entertain the thoughts of our diſſolution; yet neither ought we to be overwhelm'd by the fears of it: we muſt not ſuffer our ſelves to be unman'd, diſpirited, and caſt down by them. For what is there in death ſo very terrible and ſhocking, that we ſhould not be able to bear our ſelves up with decency upon the view of it? Is it ſo very hard to be willing to part with the pleaſures and ſatisfactions here below? It cannot certainly be ſo to the righteous, who hath always made it his buſineſs to ſit looſe from theſe things, and, in obedience to the directions of the Apoſtle, hath been *without carefulneſs* in theſe matters. 1 Cor. 7.32. It may perhaps be, at firſt view, ſome little uneaſineſs to a good man, ſhould he be call'd out of the world, juſt as he is in the midſt of ſome great and noble deſign for the good of it; but this uneaſineſs will ſoon abate, when he conſiders that the all-powerful and all-wiſe God ſtands in no need of his weak aſſiſtance, and that he can effect, if he ſees it neceſſary to effect, the ſame, or a much better deſign, by, or even without, any other human methods. If a concern to promote his friends or his family's good ſhould make him the leſs willing to depart hence, this unwillingneſs will ſoon be remov'd, when he conſiders that he leaves them in the hands of a gracious and a merciful God; and that they will be much ſafer and happier under his care and protection, than they could poſſibly have been under his own. If laſtly, the conſideration of his own frailties and infirmities makes even the good man tremble to *appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt*, let him remember that he hath *a merciful high-prieſt* at the right hand of God, to mediate and intercede for him; and what tho' he be now conſcious of many frailties and infirmities, yet he is not ſure that, ſhould he be permitted to live longer, he ſhould have fewer of theſe infirmities to account for. Of this he may unqueſtionably be ſure, that if he hath ſincerely begg'd God's pardon for theſe infirmities, and us'd his utmoſt endeavour to get rid of them, they ſhall never riſe up in judgment againſt him, nor bring him in the day of trial to *ſhame and confuſion of face*.

And thus I have endeavour'd to repreſent to you ſome of the chief and moſt neceſſary qualifications of a good death; faith, hope, charity, and a willingneſs to part with this world. Let it therefore be our chief care and buſineſs early, and betimes, to arm our ſouls with theſe neceſſary qualifications: ſo ſhall we live happily, and die comfortably; ſo ſhall we be always ready to *go out and meet the bride-groom*, whenever he ſhall be pleas'd to call us; in a word, ſo ſhall we have nothing elſe to do, when we come to die, but to *commend our ſpirits into the hand of God*, and to depart joyfully out of this world, in ſure and certain hope of our reſurrection to eternal life in that which is to come.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant.

SERMON LIX.

PHILIP. I. 21. Latter part of the verſe

——— *To die is gain.*

The whole verſe runs thus,

For to me to live is Chriſt, and to die is gain.

THE fears of death are ſo terrible and ſhocking to the natural man; ſo apt to force themſelves upon his mind on all occaſions, and to raiſe ſuch anxious and tormenting thoughts within his breaſt, that the greateſt pretenders to wiſdom have, in all ages of the world, taken the moſt pains to free themſelves from them. To this end ſome have adviſ'd their followers to think as little as they can of death; to ſhift the melancholy ſcene when-ever it comes in view, and divert and entertain their minds with a more agreeable face of things. But miſerable comforters are theſe men, whoſe preſcriptions tend, not to cure the evil, but only to lay it aſleep for a time, till it gathers freſh ſtrength, breaks out at laſt, and rages with greater vehemence. Thoſe pleaſures, with which they propoſe to amuſe and divert our minds from the mortifying conſideration of our latter end, are ſo far from being of any uſe to remove or mitigate the evil we complain of, that they only add to, and increaſe it; and, by hiding it from our eyes, make it impoſſible for us to find out any effectual remedy againſt it. And therefore thoſe Philoſophers have talk'd more to the purpoſe, who, to reconcile men's minds to the thoughts of death, have repreſented it as a debt and tribute, which we all owe to nature; as a ſleep, an harbour, an haven; a reſt from all the cares, miſeries, and calamities of this life. But neither are the notions and reaſonings of theſe men ſufficient to make us eaſy under the apprehenſion of our approaching diſſolution. This way of arguing hath this great defect in it, that the principles upon which it is built are falſe and fallacious; and tho' they were allow'd to be true, are yet too weak to bear the weight that is laid upon them. For the ſoul does not, as theſe men ſuppoſe, periſh and fall to pieces with the body, but is immaterial and immortal: and death does not put an end to our being, but only tranſlates us into another, and a far different ſtate; a ſtate, wherein we ſhall be unconceivably happy, or infinitely miſerable to all eternity. Nay, ſo ineffectual and unſatisfying are all the comforts which theſe notions afford, that, were they admitted as true, they would yet yield no comfort to us, who, notwithſtanding all theſe plauſible ſpeculations, ſhould, thro' the fear of death, be forc'd ſtill to continue all our life time ſubject to bondage. For it would allay and embitter our higheſt enjoyments, to conſider that both they and we muſt ſhortly have an end; and that within a little while we ſhould have nothing remain of them, no, not ſo much as the remembrance of what we have been. So earneſtly do we deſire the continuance of our beings; ſo paſſionately do we wiſh for the enjoyment of good, as well as for the abſence of evil, that no opinions will ever be able to reconcile us to the thoughts of death, but ſuch as open to us a proſpect beyond the grave, and repreſent to our view a never-fading ſcene of happineſs in another world. The Heathens therefore might well be aſtoniſh'd and over-whelm'd with fear, when they conſider'd their latter end, becauſe they were ſo much at a loſs to know what would be their condition after it: but thanks be to God, there is no ground for thoſe deſponding fears in us, to whom 2 Tim. 1. 10. *Chriſt hath brought life and immortality to light thro' the Goſpel.* He, c. 4. v. 8. who knows that *there is laid up for him a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give him at* the great *day* of accounts, will very naturally break forth into thoſe paſſionate expreſſions of St. Phil. 1. 23. *Paul,* and *deſire to depart, and to be with Chriſt, which is far better.* Death, with all its terrors in array about it, can never be formidable to him, who, upon rational and unſhaken grounds, firmly and ſteadily believes that *To die is gain.*

AND that it is ſo, will evidently appear, if we conſider thoſe innumerable evils, which by death we are deliver'd from; and thoſe unſpeakable advantages, which we are thereby made partakers of.

AND *Firſt,* By death we are deliver'd from the ſlaviſh captivity and tyranny of ſin.

WHILST we continue in this ſinful world, we are perpetually provoking God every day: Pſal. 38. 4. Our *iniquities go over our head, and are as an heavy burden too heavy for us;* 40. v. 12. *they encompaſs us about on every ſide, and take ſuch faſt hold of us, that we are not able to look up.* But by Rom. 6. 6. death this *body of ſin ſhall be deſtroy'd;* we ſhall be no longer under the poſſibility of offending or diſpleaſing God, but ſhall be *free from ſin* in the beſt ſenſe of the word. For ſuch is the freedom of the bleſt, that they cannot ſwerve from their duty, nor do otherwiſe than be mindful of their dependence on their great Creator, who will be then properly and literally ever before their eyes. Is it not to be eſteem'd an advantage, do we not *count it all joy,* to be deliver'd from evil? And is there in the world a greater evil than ſin? What is there which we can with more reaſon be afraid of, than the diſpleaſure of God? And can there then be a greater advantage, than to be freed from the danger of offending him any more? Whilſt we continue in this world, may we not cry Pſal. 38. 3. out with the holy Pſalmiſt, *There is no reſt in our bones, becauſe of our ſin; we are troubled, we bow down greatly; our ſorrow is continually before us?* And is it not then a great advantage to us to have this *our ſorrow turn'd into joy?* To be ſo far from provoking the Almighty by our ſins, that we ſhall be *holy as he is holy, perfect as he is perfect?* Do we not daily put up our prayers to the throne of grace, that God would "vouchſafe to keep us without ſin"? And is it not a mark of the greateſt favour, when God ſo fully grants our requeſts; when he ſo effectually anſwers our addreſſes? Would we be thought ſincere and in earneſt, when in the moſt venerable part of divine worſhip we ſolemnly profeſs to God, that the "remembrance of our ſins is grievous unto us, "that the burden of them is intolerable"? And ſhall we not then think it an advantage to us, when that happy time is come, when our ſins ſhall be clean blotted out; when we ſhall be eas'd of the burden we complain of, and deliver'd from the yoke which is too heavy for us to bear?

BUT *Secondly*, As we are by death preſerv'd from ſin, ſo are we by it deliver'd from the temptations of Satan.

IN this world, what do we elſe but wage a continual and a doubtful war with our ſworn enemy the devil? We are always warding off his blows, always upon our defence againſt *the fiery darts of Satan*. We have a perpetual conflict with avarice, luſt, anger, and ambition: we have a troubleſom and uninterrupted combat with the allurements of the fleſh from within, and the aſſaults of the world from without. The ſoul of man is on all ſides beſieg'd and ſurrounded with a great number of enemies confederated againſt her; each of which ſingly and apart is an over-match for her, unleſs ſhe calls in for auxiliaries from heaven: Thoſe, which ſhe can ſcarce reſiſt ſeverally, combine together to deſtroy her. If avarice is overcome, luſt ſeconds it; if luſt be ſubdu'd, ambition takes up the weapon; if ambition be ſuppreſs'd, anger ruffles the ſoul, pride ſwells it, drunkenneſs overwhelms it, envy waſts and conſumes it: ſo many perſecutions doth the ſoul continually endure; to ſo many dangers is it perpetually ſubject; And can we ſtill deſire to live among the ſnares of the devil? Do we not pant after deliverance, and haſten towards *the haven where we would be*? Should we not long for the opportunity of a mature death, and the completion of Chriſt's promiſe, that *our ſorrow may be turn'd into joy*, and we may be plac'd Joh. 16. 20. without the reach of theſe temptations, which do here conſtantly beſet us? *Wo to the inhabitants of the earth*, ſays the voice from heaven in the Rev. 12. 12. Revelations, *for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, becauſe he knoweth that he hath but a ſhort time*. The time of our ſojourning here is, he knows, the only time he can tempt us in, and therefore he always makes the moſt of it, and never loſes any opportunity of aſſaulting us by all his devices, with his utmoſt rage and fury. The account he gave of himſelf to God was, that *he came from walking up and* Job. 1. 1. *down in the earth, and from going to and fro in it*. St. *Peter* aſſures us, that the end of this his buſy reſtleſs employment is, *like a roaring lyon*, 1 Pet. 5. 8. *to ſeek whom he may devour*. And can we then think it an advantage to dwell continually where Satan's ſeat is? Why ſhould we be ſo unwilling to part with an abode, where we are ſo conſtantly expos'd to the inſults of our ſpiritual adverſary? Should we not rather be deſirous to be admitted into the city of God, from whence he has been long ſince caſt out, and whither he will never any more gain admittance?

OUR life here on earth is a continual conflict with temptations: we are always ſtrugling with a moſt ſubtle, malicious, and powerful enemy; *wreſtling not againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities and powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wicked-* Epheſ. 6. 12. *neſs in high places*. Nor is it enough to be now and then victorious, we muſt be *more than conquerours*; and one ſingle defeat, if not recover'd,

will be ſufficient to rob us of our victory, and bereave us of our *crown of glory*: and how many are there, whoſe *latter end* our Adverſary hath by this means made *worſe than their beginning*? When men are proof againſt all his ſollicitations to evil, and cannot, by all his methods of deſtroying ſouls, be tempted to commit the ſin he would ſeduce them to; how often does he terrifie their conſciences with perplexing doubts and ſcruples, with groundleſs ſuſpicions of their own ſincerity, and diſtruſtful thoughts of the mercy of God? How often does he ſuggeſt to their minds impious and blaſphemous thoughts; and when he can't betray them into ſin, poſſeſs their ſouls with an unhappy opinion that he hath? When he would ſeduce them to lay aſide their confidence in God, what artifices and illuſions does he not make uſe of to repreſent the Almighty to them as the King of terrors, ready to execute upon them *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh*? And hence is it that
Luk. 11. 24. these unhappy men go about *ſeeking reſt and finding none*: *when they*
Job. 7. 13,14. *ſay, their bed ſhall comfort them*, and *their couch ſhall eaſe their complaint*; *then he ſcares them with dreams, and terrifies them thro' viſions*,
v. 15. 'till, as holy *Job* ſpeaks, *their ſoul chuſes ſtrangling*. The greateſt Saints on earth have not been exempted from ſuch ſevere trials: Nor is it to be wondered that he ſhould thus furiouſly aſſault poor, feeble, mortal men, ſince we read how importunately he tempted even our bleſſed Saviour himſelf; and ſure the ſervants can't hope to eſcape better than their Maſter. If his and their enemy durſt *do ſuch things in a*
Luk. 23. 31. *green tree, what will he not do in the dry*? The ſevereſt enemy St. *Paul*
2 Cor. 12. 7. ever engag'd, was *the meſſenger of Satan*, which was ſent *to buffet him*.
c. 11. 26. Tho' he was *in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderneſs, in perils in the ſea, in perils among falſe brethren*; yet theſe, and many greater hardſhips than theſe, were more eaſy to be endur'd, and gave him leſs diſturbance, than that *thorn in the fleſh*, which the devil by the divine permiſſion afflicted him with: for *the ſpi-*
Prov. 18. 14. *rit of a man may ſuſtain his infirmity; but a wounded ſpirit who can bear?*

SUCH is often the condition of the faithful ſouldiers and ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt; ſuch the temptations they muſt encounter, whilſt they are *preſent in the body, and are abſent from the Lord*: but when by death they are tranſlated into his glorious preſence, they are then out of Satan's reach, free from all the ſtratagems and aſſaults of the tempter. The devil and all his wicked angels are for ever caſt down from heaven; his *fiery darts* will none of them be able to reach ſo high, as to hurt or diſmay any of the inhabitants of that bleſſed place: For, tho' we read
Job. 1. 6. in the book of *Job*, that *when the ſons of God came to preſent themſelves before the Lord, Satan came alſo among them*; yet we don't find that he attempted, or ſo much as durſt hope, to diſturb the happy re-
Rev. 12. 10. poſe of the bleſſed there. No, *The heavens may rejoyce, and they that*
c. 20. 3. *dwell in them; for the accuſer of the brethren is caſt down, which accus'd them before our God day and night: he is caſt into the bottomleſs pit, he is ſhut up, and a ſeal ſet upon him*; ſo that he ſhall never any more approach that inacceſſible light to moleſt the Saints that dwell there. And can there be greater gain to us than to be added to the number of thoſe bleſſed ſpirits, who, in token of their complete
Rev. 7. 9. and perfect victory, are *cloath'd with white robes, and palms in their*
c. 3. 21. *hands*, and honour'd with the illuſtrious privilege of *ſitting down with*

the

the Lamb upon his throne, even as he alſo overcame, and is ſat down with his Father upon his throne. So ineſtimable is the advantage, which *they that die in the Lord*, are by death made partakers of.

BUT *Thirdly*, Another privilege they gain by death is, that they are deliver'd from the cares, troubles, and vexations of the world.

THE account which *Jacob* gave of himſelf to *Pharaoh, Few and evil* Gen. 47. 9.
have been the days of the years of thy ſervant, may with equal truth be affirm'd of the reſt of mankind: for *our days are vanity*; and life, as it fares with us now, is little elſe but a continu'd ſcene of miſery. We have many ſuffering capacities; and who is there that is not wounded in ſome of them, very often in ſeveral at once? Moſt of the ſeeming happineſs of the world is nothing elſe but art and hypocriſy: we ſee the outward marks of felicity, the viſible ſigns and tokens of joy and ſatiſfaction; but know nothing of thoſe many ſecret cares and ſorrows that reign within, prey upon the ſpirits, and make *the heart, even in laughter, ſorrowful.* Sure we are, that if we could look into the innermoſt parts of men's minds, diſcover the many uneaſy motions of their ſouls, and view every thing that is tranſacted there, we ſhould be able to pronounce from our own knowledge, what *David* obſerves from his, that *men's lives are ſpent with grief, and their years with ſighing. Solomon* tells us, that *he return'd and conſider'd all the oppreſſions that are done* Eccleſ. 4. 1,2.
under the ſun; that *he beheld the tears of ſuch as were oppreſs'd, and they had no comforter, and on the ſide of their oppreſſours there was power, but they had no comforter.* This conſideration led him to *praiſe the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive*: and the ſame conſideration, if ſufficiently attended to, would make us alſo entertain a more favourable opinion of death, and fully ſatisfie us of that concerning truth, that to be *abſent from the body* is to a well-prepar'd Chriſtian highly deſirable; ſince by death we are deliver'd from thoſe miſeries and calamities which have layn ſo hard upon ſome men, that to be eas'd of them they have made even death their wiſh, their ſanctuary, their aim; and have *rejoyc'd and been exceeding glad,* Job. 3.
when they have found the grave: for *there the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and there the weary be at reſt; there the priſoners reſt together, they hear not the voice of the oppreſſour: the ſmall and the great are there, and the ſervant is free from his maſter.* They are there in no more danger of being infected by the ſecret poiſon of bad examples; the horrid impiety of bold and daring ſinners does no more terrifie and grieve them; their abominable converſation is no longer a trouble to them: their eyes will no more guſh out with water at the ſight of their ungodly actions; their ears will be no longer ſhock'd with their horrid oaths and imprecations; nor will they be in any fear or danger of becoming, on any account, partakers with them in their ſins. No, they are deliver'd from the preſent, and, which ought not to be overlook'd by us, from the future evils of this world. Death ſhelters them from many miſeries and calamities, which, if they continu'd here on earth, would otherwiſe befall them. They are taken away from the evil to come, and die in an happy ignorance of thoſe evils, which, if known, might make their lives uneaſy, and ſend them *down with ſorrow*, and perhaps not without ſin, *to the grave*; ſo truly, ſo exceedingly do we gain by death. And we ſhall be yet farther convinc'd of this truth, if we conſider

Fourthly, THAT by death we are deliver'd from the many difficulties and hardſhips even of our duty it ſelf.

Matt. 11. 30. THO' *Chriſts yoke* be in it ſelf *eaſy, and his burden* in its own nature
light; yet, by reaſon of our corrupt affections and inclinations, there is
often an hard ſtruggle between the fleſh and the ſpirit. Our Saviour
Matt. 19. 24. himſelf aſſures us, that it is *eaſier for a camel to go thro' the eye of a*
needle, than for ſome men to enter into the kingdom of God; and the un-
eaſineſs and difficulty of performing ſome duties is, and may be, very
Matt. 5. 29, 30. fitly compar'd to the *cutting off a right hand*, or *plucking out a right eye*.
Gal. 5. 17. But by death this *luſting of the fleſh againſt the ſpirit, and of the ſpirit*
Matt. 26. 41. *againſt the fleſh*, is quite deſtroy'd. *The ſpirit* will then be *willing*, and
the fleſh will not be *weak*. *To will* will be *preſent with us*, and we ſhall
Rom. 7. 18. *find alſo how to perform the thing that is good*. Our duty will be then
our pleaſure and our happineſs; it will be then our *meat* and our
drink, our refreſhment and delight, *to do the will of our Father which is*
in heaven: and we ſhall be ſo far from finding any difficulty in conform-
ing our wills to the divine, that it will be impoſſible for us to do other-
wiſe. The beatifick viſion of God will refine and ſpiritualize the whole
1 John 3. 2. frame and temper of our minds: for when *we ſee him as he is, we*
ſhall be like him whom we thus ſee; like him in holineſs, and like him
Pſal. 17. 15. in bliſs; and *when we* thus *awake after his likeneſs, we ſhall be ſatiſ-*
fy'd with it. For death does not only deliver us from the evils and
hardſhips of this preſent life, but carries us to another and a better; to
a life, not only free from miſery, but full of glory and immortality.

Jam. 1. 12. BLESSED, ſays St. *James*, *is the man that endureth temptation; for*
when he is tried, he ſhall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath
Job 19. 26, 27. *promiſ'd to them that love him*: *Tho' after our skin, worms deſtroy this*
body, yet in our fleſh ſhall we ſee God; whom we ſhall ſee for our ſelves,
and our eyes ſhall behold, and not another, tho' our reins are conſum'd
within us. For the grave ſhall not deſtroy our bodies, but only preſerve
them for a glorious reſurrection. The ſea, death, and hell, ſhall deliver
up the dead which are in them, but only with this difference, that what
1 Cor. 15. 42. they receiv'd in *diſhonour*, they ſhall reſtore in *honour*; that which was
ſown in corruption, ſhall be rais'd in incorruption; that which was *ſown*
in weakneſs, ſhall be rais'd in power; and that which was before *mortal*,
Rev. 21. 4. ſhall then be cloth'd with *immortality*. Then *ſhall all tears be wip'd from*
our eyes; and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying;
neither ſhall there be any more pain; for the former things are paſs'd
Wiſd. 5. 15, 16. *away*, and we ſhall be receiv'd into new heavens, *where we ſhall live for*
evermore; our reward alſo ſhall be with the Lord, and the care of us
with the moſt High. Therefore ſhall we receive a glorious kingdom, and
a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand; for with his right hand ſhall
he cover us, and with his arm ſhall he protect us.

THESE are ſome few of thoſe many advantages, which thro' death are communicated to us. And are they not ſufficient to reconcile us to the thoughts of it? Do they not abundantly prove to us that *to die is gain*? Ought not theſe thoughts to abate the natural terrors of death, when it attacks us in our own perſons, or when it ſtrikes us with ſtill greater terror in depriving us of our friends and relations? We muſt conſider that they are not loſt to us, but ſent before us: and it ſhould be ſome mitigation of our ſorrow, when we put on our mourning weeds for them here, to reflect that they in the mean time are cloath'd with white robes above. We muſt give no occaſion to infidels to object, that

thoſe whom we profeſs to believe are living with Chriſt, we bewail in
the ſame manner, as if we really believ'd they were utterly loſt and ex-
tinguiſh'd. *If we believe that Jeſus died, and roſe again; even ſo them* 1 Theſſ. 4. 14.
alſo which ſleep in Jeſus will God bring with him. Chriſt himſelf hath
told us, that he is *the reſurrection and the life*; that *he who believes in* John 11. 25, 26.
him, tho' he dyes, yet ſhall he live; and whoſoever lives and believes in him,
ſhall never die. If we believe in Chriſt, we may ſecurely depend upon
this promiſe; and may with ſome degree of cheerfulneſs part with them
for a time, who, as we are aſſur'd, ſhall live, and with whom we are
confident we our ſelves ſhall live, eternally. That in the mean time
they and we die, is, that by death we may be tranſlated to immortality.
This mortal life muſt give place, before we can taſte of that which is
immortal. Now who would not make haſte to a better ſtate? Who doth
not deſire to be quickly chang'd, that he may be *conform'd to the image*
of Chriſt? Who doth not deſire, that the prayer which our Saviour
makes for us, may ſpeedily be heard, that his will may readily be ful-
fill'd; *For I will that they alſo whom thou haſt given me, be with me,* John 17. 24.
where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou haſt given me.
But we muſt ſtill remember, that theſe advantages will not be beſtow'd
upon all alike, without diſtinction. To the wicked death, notwith-
ſtanding all that hath been ſaid, is ſtill *the king of terrors*; but *to me,*
ſays the Apoſtle, *to dye is gain*; *to me* who am a believer; *to me* who
have kept *a conſcience void of offence*, both *towards God, and towards* Acts 24. 16.
man; *to me* who *have fought a good fight, finiſh'd my courſe, and kept* 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8.
the faith: *for me* therefore there is *henceforth laid up a crown of righ-*
teouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give me at that day,
and not to me only, but unto all them alſo that love his appearing. If
therefore we would be of the number of thoſe to whom *to dye is gain,*
let us take care that we *be followers of* this our Apoſtle, *as he was of*
Chriſt: let us live the life, and then we may reſt aſſur'd that we ſhall *die*
the death of the righteous. Let the whole courſe of our lives be ſpent
in imitation of him, and then we need not doubt but that our *latter*
end alſo will *be like his.*

We have ſeen the many great advantages, which, if we are not want-
ing to our ſelves, we may gain by death: let this conſideration be of
weight enough to put us upon ſecuring our title to theſe advantages;
and let the thoughts of them arm and fortifie us againſt all the terrors,
which this our laſt enemy carries along with him; that ſo, at that great
day of trial, we may behave our ſelves with a becoming conſtancy and
reſolution, and neither caſt away our confidence in God, nor place it
any where elſe, either in heaven or in earth, but in him alone. Let the
miſeries of this life teach us to ſet an higher value upon the happineſs of
the next; but let them not ſink ſo deep upon us, as to betray us into
impatience or repining under them. Let us poſſeſs our ſouls with a
juſt and lively ſenſe of thoſe mighty privileges, which we ſhall gain by
death; but let us not, on any account, by any means, dare to do any
thing that may haſten it to our ſelves; as knowing that *he that makes* Prov. 28. 20.
haſte even this way *to be rich, ſhall not be innocent*; but let us, with
the moſt humble ſubmiſſion and reſignation to the divine will, expect
with patience the ſalvation of God, and with holy *Job wait all the days* Job 14. 14.
of our appointed time, until our change comes, that when it does come,
we may *lye down in peace*, and *reſt in our beds*, till we are awak'd by that
joyful ſound of the laſt trumpet, *Ariſe ye dead, and come to judgment.*

SERMON LX.

The intermediate State and Condition of the ſouls of the Righteous from their departure out of this life to the Reſurrection.

Isai. LVII. 2.

He ſhall enter into peace: they ſhall reſt in their beds, each one walking in his uprightneſs.

IN theſe words of the Prophet, we have an account given us of the happy ſtate of the righteous after their departure out of this ſinful and troubleſom world; ſuch an account as is ſufficient to arm us againſt the terrors of death, when the thoughts of it do at any time offer themſelves to us, and to make us bear up under the loſs of our neareſt and deareſt friends, when they are by death ſnatch'd away from us. That the Prophet here ſpeaks of the death of the righteous, and of their happy condition after death, is evident from the foregoing verſe, wherein he had made this well-weigh'd and uſeful reflection, *The righteous periſheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none conſidering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.* The death of the righteous is a ſevere judgment of God, not upon thoſe who are taken away, but upon thoſe from whom they are taken: they who die have reaſon to rejoyce, becauſe they are *taken away from the evil to come*; but thoſe who ſurvive them have reaſon to lament, becauſe their removal is a ſign that there are ſome clouds gathering, ſome evils impending over their heads, out of the reach of which God is pleas'd to place his choſen ones, by removing them into another world.

He, the righteous, *ſhall enter into peace*; that is, the juſt and upright man ſhall, when he dies, enter into a ſtate of reſt and quiet, where he ſhall be no longer diſturb'd with thoſe evils, to which, during his pilgrimage in this life, he was expoſ'd; nor liable to any of thoſe calamities, which, if he had liv'd longer upon earth, might have overtaken him.

him. *They*, that is, all the righteous, for the number is varied, to ſhew that the Prophet doth not here deſcribe the future condition of any one good man, but of all the Saints of God in general, *ſhall reſt in their beds*; their bodies ſhall be ſafely repoſited in their graves, where they ſhall ſleep quietly till they are awaken'd by the laſt trump; and their ſouls ſhall reſt unmoleſted and at eaſe in thoſe receptacles, which God hath prepar'd for the abode of the ſpirits of thoſe *who die in the Lord*: *Each one walking in his own uprightneſs*; that is, each one ſhall reap the fruits of his paſt integrity; he ſhall look back upon a well-ſpent life with comfort and peace of conſcience; and he ſhall with joy and pleaſure contemplate that great and glorious reward, which God hath prepar'd for all thoſe who live and die in his favour.

FROM theſe words I ſhall take occaſion to enquire into the ſtate, and condition of the ſouls of the righteous after their departure out of this life, which is here repreſented to us, not as a ſtate of perfect bliſs, ariſing from the accumulation of every thing that is good and joyous, but as a ſtate of peace and tranquillity, reſulting from the removal of every thing that is evil and troubleſom.

THE ſtate of the righteous after the reſurrection is repreſented to us in holy Scripture in ſuch a manner, that we cannot poſſibly doubt but it is a ſtate of perfect and conſummate happineſs; but the Scriptures are not ſo very plain in deſcribing their intermediate condition, but that there is room for an enquiry what is the ſtate of the faithful who die in Chriſt, from their death to the reſurrection; whether it be the ſame before as after the reſurrection; or, if different, in what reſpects it differs from it. It is an opinion generally receiv'd, that the ſouls of the Saints, after their departure out of the body, are immediately by the holy angels convey'd into the higheſt heavens, and are there admitted into the glorious preſence of God, and of his Son Jeſus Chriſt; and that they do there enjoy the ſame happineſs and glory, which they ſhall enjoy after the reſurrection of the body; the ſame, not only in ſubſtance, but in degree, barely with this one difference, that their bodies are not as yet partakers of this glory, becauſe they are not as yet rais'd from the dead, and reunited to their ſouls.

THERE is another opinion ſomewhat different from this, leſs generally receiv'd than it, but I think much more conſonant to the Word of God, that the happineſs of departed ſouls is, in the degree of it, leſs perfect before, than it ſhall be after the reſurrection; that their happineſs before the reſurrection conſiſts chiefly in this, that the faithful are by death freed from all thoſe cares, troubles, dangers, afflictions, temptations, doubts, miſeries, anxieties, ſorrow, grief, and anguiſh, with which they are perpetually diſturb'd, wearied, and tormented in this mortal life, and that aſſoon as they are releas'd from their bodies, they do enjoy a perfect quiet and eaſe; in regard of which eaſe and freedom from all diſquietude thoſe are pronounc'd *bleſſed who die in the Lord*, becauſe *from thenceforth they reſt from their labours*. Nor are they only free from miſery, but alſo from ſin; for, together with the body, pious ſouls put off all thoſe defilements of ſin, which they had contracted by their dwelling in the body, and are now arriv'd to that happy ſtate which the Apoſtle aſpir'd after, when he cried out, *wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from this body of ſin*? That ſtate of grace which was begun in them, during this life, by the Spirit of Chriſt, and thoſe Chriſtian virtues wherewith they had taken care to adorn themſelves, faith, Rev. 14. 13. Rom. 7. 24.

hope,

hope, charity, and the like, are by death very much improv'd, and their happineſs is thereby proportionably augmented; they have now a clearer and a diſtincter view of that glory which is reſerv'd for them till the laſt day; and the ſure and certain proſpect of this doth add to their preſent joy and ſatisfaction. For if pious and faithful men in this world are ſaid by St. *Peter* *to rejoyce with joy unſpeakable and full of glory*, as often as they fix their eyes upon that diſtant reward which they hope for, when Chriſt ſhall come in glory to recompenſe his Saints; then undoubtedly the joy which this proſpect will afford them, when it is by death brought nearer to them, when it is at a leſs diſtance, when they ſee it more clearly, when they have no doubts of compaſſing it, when they have an earneſt and pledge of it, in that tranquillity which they are actually poſſeſs'd of, muſt be ſtill more raviſhing and unconceivable. This ſtate of departed ſouls, tho' it be much ſuperior to that happineſs, which thoſe who are moſt happy in this world do enjoy, doth yet fall much ſhort of that bliſs, which the ſame ſouls ſhall enjoy after the reſurrection; is as much inferior to it, as the expectation of a diſtant good is to the preſent enjoyment of it; as hope is to actual poſſeſſion. 1 Pet. 1. 8.

Now tho' ſeveral arguments may be brought in favour of the former opinion, according to which the ſouls of departed Saints are, from the time of their departure, perfectly and completely happy; yet the latter opinion, which ſuppoſes their happineſs before the reſurrection not perfect but partial, ſeems to me more conſonant to the whole tenour of the Goſpel, and will, I doubt not, ſeem ſo to you alſo, if you ſhall be pleas'd with me to conſider thoſe paſſages of holy Writ, wherein this doctrine is, I think, in plain and expreſs terms deliver'd. In the 11th chapter of the *Revelations* of St. *John*, at the 17th verſe, we find this doxology made by *the four and twenty elders which ſat before God on their ſeats*, who *falling upon their faces worſhipp'd God*, and ſaid, *We give thee thanks, O Lord God almighty, which art, and waſt, and art to come; becauſe thou haſt taken to thee thy great power, and haſt reign'd. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead that they ſhould be judg'd, and that thou ſhouldſt give reward unto thy ſervants the Prophets, and to the Saints, and them that fear thy name, ſmall and great.* The time here allotted for God's giving a reward to his Saints, is *the time when the dead ſhall be judg'd*; then, and not till then, *the Prophets*, as well as the other later Saints, are here ſaid to be rewarded: there is therefore a reward reſerv'd for the righteous, which doth not commence from their death, but ſhall then firſt be diſpens'd to them, *when the dead ſhall be judg'd* after the reſurrection. It was the ſame time that St. *Paul* had in his eye, when looking backwards upon his paſt conflicts, and forwards upon his future recompence, he made this noble declaration of his ſincerity, and his aſſurance built upon the conſciouſneſs of it; *I have fought a good fight, I have finiſh'd my courſe, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous Judge ſhall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them alſo that love his appearing.* *The crown of righteouſneſs* was not then to be ſet upon St. *Paul*'s head, when he had juſt *finiſh'd his courſe*, but was from that time to be *laid up for him*; it was not to be *given* till *that day*, the great day of judgment; not to be given him ſeparately, but at the ſame time *to him*, and *to all them that lov'd the appearance* of the Judge, when the Judge ſhould appear. Hence it is that the Saints of God are directed 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8.

to look for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, Tit. 2. 13. *and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt,* to look for theſe, not as divided one from the other, but as contemporary one with the other. For *the bleſſed hope* is the bleſſedneſs hop'd for; and ſince the Apoſtle joyns it with the appearance of our Lord, he plainly ſhews that the perfect bliſs, which we hope for, will not be beſtow'd upon us till the Lord appears; and is not therefore to be entirely poſſeſs'd by the Saints before the reſurrection, but to be expected by them after the reſurrection and the day of judgment.

But now, if, after the appearance of Chriſt, there ſhall be no other acceſſion to the happineſs of departed Saints, but what ariſes from the glorification of their bodies; if, even before his appearance, their ſouls are already poſſeſs'd of all that happineſs of which they are capable, and to which they are thro' the merits of their Saviour entitled; there can be no ſufficient reaſon given, why they ſhould be ſaid to expect the appearance of Chriſt, in order to their being partakers of that bleſſedneſs which they hope for. St. *Paul* pray'd for *Oneſiphorus,* that he might *find mercy of the Lord in that day,* that emphatical day, when he and 2 Tim. 1. 18. all mankind ſhould be judg'd; and we are commanded by St. *Peter* to 1 Pet. 1. 13. *hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt.* Our *inheritance* is, by that Apoſtle in that chapter, v. 4, 5. ſaid to be *reſerv'd in heaven for us, to be reveal'd in the laſt time,* that is, at the end of the world; our *praiſe, and honour, and glory,* are, v. 7. according to the ſame Apoſtle in the ſame chapter, to commence *at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt.*

When St. *Paul* would comfort the *Roman* Confeſſors under their preſent calamities, he tells them, *that the ſufferings of this preſent time* Rom. 8. 18. *are not worthy to be compar'd with the glory that ſhall be reveal'd;* and that they might not be at a loſs to know when this glory ſhould be reveal'd, he directs them to *wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption* v. 23. *of the body*: the body ſhall then be redeem'd, when it ſhall be raiſ'd from the dead: when therefore the body ſhall be raiſ'd, then ſhall come the adoption waited for; then, and not till then, ſhall that *glory, with which the ſufferings of this world are not worthy to be compar'd, be reveal'd in us.* Till that time *our life is hid with Chriſt in God: when Chriſt, who is our life ſhall appear, then ſhall we alſo appear with him in glory,* as we are taught by St. *Paul, Col.* 3. 4. Our glory therefore, and not only a ſmall increaſe of it, by the reunion of our bodies to our ſouls, is deferr'd till the appearance of Chriſt. In the mean time we live, but *our life is hid with Chriſt in God*; that is, God reſerves it for us in ſecret, not to be fully reveal'd, till *Chriſt, who is our life, ſhall appear. Our life is hid in God,* not only in reſpect of the world or unbelievers, for the Apoſtle here makes no diſtinction between faithful and unfaithful, but ſpeaks only of believers, but it is hid alſo in regard of the faithful themſelves, to whom it is hidden as to the manner and circumſtances of it; becauſe *eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither* 1 Cor. 2. 9. *hath it entred into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him.* Departed ſouls may have clearer conceptions of theſe things after death, than they had before it; but they ſhall not have adequate notions of it, till they fully enjoy it; and becauſe this enjoyment ſhall not be compleat till the appearing of Chriſt, therefore till that time their *life is* ſaid to be *hidden in Chriſt.*

To the ſame purport is the declaration of the Apoſtle S. *John*, Ep. c. 3. v. 2. *Beloved, now are we the ſons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; but we know that when he ſhall appear we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is.* We have no diſtinct conceptions of that happineſs which we ſhall at laſt enjoy, but only know in general that it is unconceivably great; when we feel it, when we actually enjoy it, then ſhall we be able to comprehend it: we ſhall not thus feel it, we ſhall not actually enjoy it in its utmoſt perfection, *till he appears*, that is, till we ſee God our Saviour as he is; we ſhall not ſee him till he comes to judge the world, for that coming of Chriſt is every where in Scripture call'd his appearance; we ſhall not therefore till then actually poſſeſs all that happineſs, which conſiſts in the viſion of God and of Chriſt. In the Rom. 8. 23. mean time *we our ſelves which have the firſt-fruits of the Spirit, groan within our ſelves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* Whenſoever this groaning firſt begins, 'tis plain that it doth not end till the redemption of the body. As long as our hope is deferr'd, ſo long are we repreſented as groaning; this groaning ſhall not ceaſe till the reſurrection of the body; till then therefore our hope is protracted, till then what we hope for is not perfectly enjoy'd. Hope and expectation therefore ſeem to have place, not only in this life, but alſo in the next, till the reſurrection; and therefore till our bodies are redeem'd, v. 24. the Apoſtle obſerves that *we are ſav'd* only *by hope*; *but hope that is ſeen is not hope*, that is, when we actually poſſeſs any thing, we no longer v. 25. hope for it; *for what a man ſeeth*, or enjoys, *why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we ſee not, then do we with patience wait for it*, till it is actually conferr'd at the reſurrection, the time fix'd for the final beſtowing of it.

This deferring of the recompence prepar'd for the righteous till the Luke 19. laſt day, is intimated to us by the parable of the talents; for the Nobleman doth not reward his ſervants, whom he had truſted with the management of the talents, till his return from that *country*, whither he had gone *to receive for himſelf a kingdom*; and I need not tell you that by this return, in the parable, is meant Chriſt's ſecond coming into the world to judge it, and to *reward every one according to their works.* Ac- Rev. 6. 9, 11. cordingly *the ſouls under the altar* are bid to *reſt for a little ſeaſon, until the number of their fellow-ſervants* and fellow-ſufferers ſhould be compleat.

In the 15th chapter of the 1st epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, we find the Apoſtle making uſe of ſuch arguments as theſe: *If there be no reſurrection of the dead, then is Chriſt not riſen; and if Chriſt be not riſen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is alſo vain. If the dead riſe not, why ſtand we in jeopardy every hour? If after the manner of men I have fought with beaſts at Epheſus, what advantageth it me, if the dead riſe not?* All which reaſonings do plainly ſuppoſe, that the happineſs which Chriſtians promiſe to themſelves in another world, doth entirely depend upon the certainty of a reſurrection; that if there be a reſurrection, they ſhall then be partakers of the bliſs which they hope for, but that if there be no reſurrection, all their hopes ſhall be defeated. For it is obſervable, that the Apoſtle doth not here plead for the certainty of a future ſtate, but only for the certainty of a reſurrection from the dead; he doth not go about to prove that the ſouls of men are immortal, which thoſe whom he diſputes againſt do not ſeem to have denied; but that their bodies ſhall be rais'd from the dead, which thoſe againſt whom he here argues, could not, or would not, be perſwaded of.

Now if the ſouls of departed Saints are actually poſſeſs'd of all the joys of heaven, even before their bodies are rais'd from the grave, then may the Apoſtle's reaſonings in this chapter ſeem to be weak and inconcluſive. For thoſe againſt whom he pleads, might very plauſibly reply, that tho' their bodies ſhould never riſe again, yet their ſouls would be compleatly happy in the fruition of God; that ſince their bliſs did not depend upon the riſing again of their bodies, they might be bleſſed to all eternity, tho' there ſhould be no ſuch thing as a reſurrection; that Chriſt died and roſe again to make an atonement for our ſins, and to purchaſe for us that immortal glory, of which our ſouls ſhall be poſſeſs'd, when they are by death ſeparated from the body; and that therefore it by no means follows, that *if there be no reſurrection of the dead, then is Chriſt not riſen*, or riſen to no purpoſe; ſince Chriſt may be ſaid to have roſe to very good purpoſe, if by his reſurrection a way is made for the entrance of our ſouls into eternal glory, tho' our bodies ſhould never be rais'd again to partake of that glory.

But now if on the other ſide it be ſuppos'd, that the happineſs of departed ſouls is in great meaſure deferr'd to the day of judgment; that before the reſurrection of their bodies, their happineſs conſiſts rather in a ſure and certain expectation, than in the actual fruition, of glory; that their preſent happineſs reſults from the ſure proſpect they have of the immenſe reward, which ſhall be allotted to them after the reſurrection; and that therefore they would not be happy, had they no ſuch proſpect of a reſurrection; then will the reaſonings of the Apoſtle be plain and cogent, cloſe and irrefragable; then will it undeniably follow, that *if there be no reſurrection from the dead*, then thoſe which are *faln aſleep in Chriſt are periſh'd*, that is, their hopes are fruſtrated, their labours are loſt, their expectations of bliſs, which depended upon the reſurrection of their bodies, are utterly defeated: then have we no hope of Chriſt in another life, and therefore *are of all men moſt miſerable*; then is it in vain that *we ſtand in jeopardy every hour*; then has St. *Paul* no *advantage* from his *fighting with beaſts at Epheſus*; then will there be no abſurdity in the principles of the men of pleaſure, or in the concluſions which they draw from them, when they ſay, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die.* For if future happineſs and miſery depend wholly upon the reſurrection, and are, as to the completion of them, ſuſpended till the reſurrection; then neither do the righteous receive the recompence of their labours, nor need the ungodly fear any vengeance for their ſins, unleſs there be a reſurrection; but if the righteous are, immediately upon the departure of their ſouls from their bodies, admitted into the beatifick preſence of God, and the actual fruition of perfect bliſs; or if the wicked are, immediately upon their being ſummon'd hence, thrown down into hell, and condemn'd to everlaſting torments; then do the arguments brought in this famous chapter for the proof of a reſurrection, fall ſhort of what they are brought for; becauſe there is a ſufficient diſcrimination between the righteous and the wicked, without a future reſurrection; ſince the former are, according to this ſuppoſition, entirely happy, the latter are exquiſitely miſerable before the reſurrection; and conſequently might be ſo to all eternity, tho' there never was to be a reſurrection.

Of a particular judgment paſs'd upon all men immediately after their departure hence, we do not find any expreſs teſtimony, that I know of, throughout the whole New Teſtament. That ſome departed ſouls are in a ſtate of happineſs, ſome in a ſtate of miſery; that, according to their different demeanour in this mortal life, their condition is different upon their tranſlation into another world; that they do not in the interval, between their being ſeparated from the body by death, and re-united to it at the reſurrection, ſleep a profound ſleep, void of all action and perception, deſtitute of life and thought, inſenſible of pleaſure and pain, as ſome ancient and modern hereticks have pretended, is evident enough from ſeveral paſſages in Holy Writ; but that theſe different ſtates are allotted them by any formal ſentence, paſs'd upon them immediately after their death; that their actions are then weigh'd and examin'd by the Judge of heaven and earth, and judgment pronounc'd upon them ſeverally, according to the good or evil they have done; that the ſtate of happineſs and miſery, which they are in from their departure out of the world, is final, and the ſame, not only as to the kind, but alſo as to the degree of it, as that to which they ſhall be adjudg'd to all eternity; that the ſouls of the righteous ſhall at the day of judgment be admitted to the participation of no other or greater bliſs, than what they before enjoy'd, nor the ſouls of the wicked condemn'd to the enduring of any other or ſorer torments, than what they before felt, is what we have no authority from the Word of God to affirm; what, I think, we have good grounds from the plain declarations of Holy Writ to deny.

According to all the accounts which the Scriptures give us of the proceſs of that great day of the Lord, when our Saviour ſhall come to judge the quick and dead, men ſhall then firſt ſtand before his judgment-Rev. 20. 12. ſeat, and then firſt undergo their trial; then ſhall *the dead, ſmall and great, ſtand before God, and the books ſhall be open'd, and the dead ſhall be judg'd out of thoſe things which were written in the books according to their works.* But why do all *the dead, both ſmall and great, ſtand* together *before God* at the laſt day? Why are *the books* then *open'd, and the dead* then *judg'd out of thoſe things which were written in the books according to their works,* if long before this they had ſeverally ſtood before God; if long before, judgment had paſs'd upon them, according to their works; if judgment had not only long ſince paſs'd, but had alſo been awarded; if they who are now to be judg'd, had long before been recompens'd according to their works? He who is appointed the Judge of all the world, and is therefore beſt acquainted with the methods and Matt. 13. 39. forms of his own judicature, hath told us, that *the harveſt,* when the tares ſhall be ſeparated from the good ſeed, *is* at *the end of the world;* that *the angels who are the reapers, ſhall* then, at the end of the world, *gather theſe tares, and burn them in the fire,* and that *the righteous ſhall then ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their Father.* But now how is this *harveſt* determin'd to be at *the end of the world,* if long before the end of the world, immediately upon the departure of good and bad men out of it, there is a final diſcrimination made between *the tares and the good ſeed*? Why are the *tares* ſaid to be *gather'd,* and to be caſt into *the fire at the end of the world,* if for ſome ages before they had been burning in the fire? Why are *the righteous* ſaid *then* to *ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their Father,* if they had long before reign'd with him in his kingdom, and ſhone there with their full luſtre?

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See Sermon XXXII. pag. 334, 335.

We have not in the whole Goſpel a fuller and clearer account of the proceſs of the laſt day, than that which is given us by our Saviour in the 25th chapter of St. *Matthew*; and according to that account it ſhould ſeem, that the Judge doth not then ratifie a ſentence which he had before paſt, but then firſt pronounce ſentence upon all nations gather'd before him. The righteous are then invited to *come*, and *inherit the kingdom prepar'd for them* indeed *from the foundation of the world*, but not till now poſſeſs'd by them: *thoſe on the left hand* are bid to *depart from God into everlaſting fire, prepar'd for the devil and his angels*, but not before felt, as far as appears, even by them, not ſurely by thoſe, who are now with ſo much pomp and ſolemnity adjudg'd to it. *The righteous* are there repreſented as ſurpris'd, that the Judge ſhould reward them for actions they were not at all conſcious of: they could not conceive how they had *fed him, whom they had never ſeen hungry*, or *given drink to him, whom they had never ſeen thirſty*; they do not appear to be as yet acquainted with his wonderful love and goodneſs, in accounting *what was done unto the leaſt of his brethren, as done unto himſelf.* And on the other ſide, the wicked are as much ſurpris'd to find themſelves charg'd with acts of cruelty and inhumanity, of which their conſciences did not accuſe them; they with amazement aſk, *When ſaw we thee an hungred, or athirſt, or a ſtranger, or naked, or ſick, or in priſon, and did not miniſter unto thee*? They ſeem unacquainted with the notion of a conſtructive barbarity towards their Saviour, in having been barbarous towards their fellow-Chriſtians: they are not aware, that *inaſmuch as they did it not to the leaſt of theſe, they did it not to him.* But now how can we account for this ſurpriſe of either ſide, if the righteous had long ſince receiv'd their full recompence for theſe very acts of charity; if the unrighteous had long ſince been condemn'd to hell, and ſuffer'd the vengeance due to them for their uncharitableneſs? According to this hypotheſis, the wicked ſhould not be now ſentenc'd to *go away into everlaſting puniſhment, and the righteous into life eternal*; but the former ſhould be remanded to thoſe regions of darkneſs, in which they had been long ſince puniſh'd; the righteous ſhould be confirm'd and eſtabliſh'd in the fruition of that glory, wherewith they were already glorified.

I would not, by any thing which I have now ſaid, be underſtood, and, if I am not miſapprehended, I cannot be underſtood, to have alleg'd or inſinuated, either that the ſouls of the deceas'd are, from the time of their deceaſe till the reſurrection, in a ſtate of death and inſenſibility; or that there is no difference till the reſurrection between the condition of thoſe *who die in the Lord*, and of thoſe who *die in their ſins*; or much leſs, that the ſouls of thoſe who die in the favour of God, are in any danger of loſing God's favour, by any actions they ſhall do after their ſeparation from their bodies; or that the ſouls of thoſe who die in a ſtate of enmity with God can, by any after-acts of repentance, reconcile themſelves to God; or that departed ſouls can, by any methods of purgation in another world, be cleans'd from the defilements which they had contracted in this, and by ſuch purifying be rendred more fit objects of God's mercy, and more worthy to be receiv'd into the kingdom of heaven; or that the ſouls of the righteous are not immediately, upon their being diſlodg'd from their mortal bodies, admitted into the participation of much greater joys than any they felt, or any they were capable of, whilſt they were clogg'd with ſinful fleſh and blood;

or that the ſouls of the wicked are not forthwith pierc'd with greater ſorrows, than any they ſuffer'd in this world from the remorſe of their ſins, or from the apprehenſion of God's judgments; but all I would contend for is barely this, that there is a great deal of difference between the meaſures of joy and miſery which departed ſouls ſhall taſte of before, and after, the reſurrection; that their intermediate ſtate ſhall, as to the fulneſs of pleaſure or pain, be very different from their final; that a great part of the happineſs of the one, ſhall conſiſt in the ſure hopes of a much more perfect happineſs ſtill in reverſion; and that as great a part of the wretchedneſs of the other, ſhall conſiſt in the diſmal apprehenſions of more exquiſite puniſhments, ſtill reſerv'd in ſtore for them againſt the great day of retribution; that after the reſurrection there ſhall be an acceſſion to the happineſs of the righteous, not only by their being then glorified in body as well as in ſpirit, but alſo by an encreaſe of that bliſs, which their ſouls did before enjoy in a lower meaſure, and in a more ſcanty proportion; that they ſhall be then admitted to a cloſer and nearer view of God, and to a more intimate union with him, who is the ſource of all happineſs; that then believers ſhall fully and entirely receive all thoſe bleſſings, which Chriſt purchas'd for them by his death, and which he beſought of his Father, when, in their behalf, he ſent up to heaven that comprehenſive prayer; *I pray not for theſe alone*, the Apoſtles, *but for them alſo which ſhall believe on me thro' their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they alſo may be one in us: and the glory which thou gaveſt me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. Father, I will that they alſo whom thou haſt given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou haſt given me; that the love, wherewith thou haſt lov'd me, may be in them, and I in them.* John 17. 20, &c.

THIS doctrine, which I have now advanc'd, concerning a difference between the ſtate of departed ſouls before and after the reſurrection, I have therefore advanc'd, becauſe I take it to be moſt conſonant to the Word of God, moſt agreeable to the ſentiments of thoſe Fathers who liv'd in the firſt and pureſt ages of the Church, and not at all liable to ſuch cavils and exceptions, as bold and licentious men would be apt to make againſt the belief of a reſurrection, and an univerſal judgment to come, if we ſhould teach that men firſt receive a full recompence for all the actions they have done in the body, and that after that they are judg'd, in order to receive that very recompence. It ſeems a much more defenſible and conſiſtent doctrine, to maintain with our Church, that "the "ſouls of the faithful, after they are deliver'd from the burden of the "fleſh, are in joy and felicity"; and yet that this joy and felicity are not ſo full and compleat, but that there is ſtill room for us to pray to God, "that he would accompliſh the number of his elect, and haſten his king-"dom, that all thoſe that are departed in the true faith of his holy name, "may have their perfect conſummation and bliſs, both in body and ſoul, "in his eternal and everlaſting glory."

HAVING ſaid what I think we have ſufficient authority from Scripture for, concerning the ſtate of ſouls departed, from their departure to the reſurrection, I ſhall not with too great curioſity enquire in what manſions or places they are receiv'd till the day of judgment, becauſe I think we have not ſufficient light from Scripture to guide us in ſuch an enquiry. Since God has not been pleas'd to give us any plain and expreſs declarations concerning the abodes of departed ſouls, it doth not become us to be too ſollicitous in prying into thoſe myſteries, which he hath thought fit to conceal. Whether the place of departed ſouls is above, within, or beneath the higheſt heavens; whether there is one common receptacle for the ſouls of the righteous and unrighteous till the reſurrection; or whether, from their departure out of their bodies, they dwell in ſeparate manſions, as is more probable; whether *Abraham's* boſom, whither *Lazarus* was carried by the angels, and hell or rather *Hades*, where the rich man was tormented, ſignifie to us places as remote, as the conditions of the poor and rich man are different; or were intended only to expreſs to us the difference of their ſtates, without determining to us the ſeveral places of their abode, are ſpeculations we are no ways concern'd to be inquiſitive about, whilſt we are ſatisfied of this main truth, that the righteous are in the intermediate time between their death and the reſurrection in a ſtate of happineſs, and the wicked in a ſtate of miſery. For as far as our apprehenſions of theſe matters go, a material place can no ways contribute either to encreaſe or to diminiſh the happineſs or miſery of an immaterial ſpirit. Spirits that are diveſted of fleſh and blood, wherever they are, carry heaven and hell along with them. The good angels are as happy here upon earth, whilſt they are employ'd here in the execution of God's will, as whilſt they are converſant in the regions above, becauſe *they do always behold the face of God, in whoſe preſence is fulneſs of joy.* *Satan* was no more happy, when he came among the Saints of God to preſent himſelf before the Lord, than he was whilſt he was *going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it.* The happineſs and miſery of pure ſpirits hath no relation, that we know of, to the place where they are; but the happineſs and miſery of embodied ſpirits, or of men who are made up of ſouls and bodies, have a dependence upon the place of their abode; and therefore we are ſure that wherever ſeparate ſouls are lodg'd till the reſurrection, after the reſurrection righteous and wicked men ſhall have places allotted to them ſuitable to their different ſtates; the former ſhall be carried up to the higheſt heavens, the latter ſhall be thrown down to the nethermoſt hell.

THAT what has been ſaid may not appear too ſpeculative, I ſhall now in the cloſe offer ſomething by way of deduction from it, that may be influential upon our practice. If the ſouls of the righteous ſhall be in a very happy ſtate after death, and yet capable of being ſtill more happy after the reſurrection, then the reward which God has prepar'd for the righteous is exceedingly great and glorious, and our encouragement to *abound in the work of the Lord*, and to perſevere in the ways of righteouſneſs, 1 Cor. 15.58. is thereunto proportionable. A great meaſure of happineſs is included in the gracious promiſe of God to his faithful ſervants, that he will *wipe away all tears from their eyes, that there ſhall be no more* Rev. 21. 4. *death, neither ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain*; but this exemption from all the ſorrows of this world is but a low degree of bliſs, in compariſon of thoſe more exalted pleaſures, which the glorified Saints ſhall after the reſurrection enjoy at the right hand of God for evermore.

HAVING *therefore promiſes* of an happineſs ſo perfect and conſum- 2 Cor. 7. 1. mate, we ought to *cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.* Since *we muſt all appear be-* c. 5. 10. *fore the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt*, before we ſhall *receive* the full and entire recompence of *the things* we have *done in our body*, the proſpect and awe of that ſolemn judgment ought conſtantly to employ our thoughts, and to influence our actions; the voice of the laſt trumpet ſummoning us to appear before the tribunal of God, ſhould be always ſounding in our ears; no day of our lives ſhould paſs without a ſerious reflection upon the approach of that great day, when *the Son of man ſhall be plac'd on the throne of his glory, when the heavens and the earth ſhall fly away before his face; when all mankind ſhall be gather'd together from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other; when the books ſhall be open'd, and the dead ſhall be judg'd out of thoſe things that are written in the books*; when the Word of God to the c. 7. 6. Prophet *Ezekiel* ſhall be fulfill'd in an higher and more extenſive ſenſe, than was meant when it was by him firſt ſent to the land; *An end is come; the end is come; it watcheth for thee, behold it is come.*

For this coming of the Lord; for the final, peremptory, irreverſible ſentence, which he ſhall then paſs; for that perfect, entire, conſummate bliſs, which he ſhall then beſtow upon all thoſe who *die in the Lord*, God of his infinite mercy prepare us all.

FINIS.

MVSEVM BRITANNICVM

BOOKS *printed for* William *and* John Innys, *at the* Weſt End *of St.* PAUL's. 1725.

FOLIO.

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Origines Sacræ: or a Rational Account of the Grounds of natural and revealed Religion, the eight Edition. To which is now added, part of another Book upon the ſame Subject. written *A. D.* 1697, publiſh'd from the Author's own Manuſcript. By the Right Reverend Father in God *Edward Stillingfleet*, D. D. late Lord Biſhop of *Worceſter*, 1724.

Antiquitates Chriſtianæ: or the Hiſtory of the Life and Death of the Holy Jeſus: As alſo the Lives, Acts and Martyrdoms of his Apoſtles, in two Parts; the firſt Part containing the Life of Chriſt, by *Jer. Taylor*, late Lord Biſhop of *Down* and *Connor*. The ſecond containing the Lives of the Apoſtles, by Dr. *William Cave*. With Cuts.

A compleat Collection of the Works of the Reverend and Learned *John Kettlewell*, B. D. formerly Vicar of *Coles-hill* in *Warwickſhire*, in two Volumes; the ſeveral Treatiſes Printed from Copies revis'd and improv'd by the Author, a little before his Death. To which is prefix'd the Life of the Author, by *George Hickes*, D. D. and *Robert Nelſon*, Eſqr; 1724.

A Rational Illuſtration of the Book of Common Prayer, and Adminiſtration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the Uſe of the Church of *England*, the third Edition, by *Charles Wheatley*, M. A. 1720.

The Genuine Works of St. *Cyprian*, Archbiſhop of *Carthage* and Primate of all *Africa*; who ſuffered Martyrdom for the Chriſtian Faith in the Year of our Lord, 258. done into *Engliſh*, and illuſtrated with divers Notes, by *Nath. Marſhal* D. D. Canon of *Windſor*, 1717.

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The Compleat Geographer: or, the Chorography and Topography of all the known Parts of the Earth, to which is premis'd an Introduction to Geography; to which are added Maps of every Country, fairly engraven on Copper, according to the lateſt Surveys and neweſt Diſcoveries; moſt engrav'd by *Herman Moll*. The fourth Edition; wherein the Deſcriptions of *Aſia*, *Africa* and *America* are compos'd a-new from the lateſt Relations of Travellers of the beſt Repute, 1723.

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Leon. Plukenetii Opera *omnia Botanica, cum Iconibus Tabulis Æneis* CCCCLIV ſumma cura depictis figurantur. VI. Tomis. 1720.

QUARTO.

A Commentary upon the Prophet *Iſaiah*, by *W. Lowth*, B. D. Prebendary of *Wincheſter*.

A Commentary upon the Prophecy and Lamentations of *Jeremiah*, by W. *Lowth*, B. D.

Philoſophical Tranſactions, giving ſome Account of the preſent Undertakings, Studies and Labours of the Ingenious, in many conſiderable Parts of the World; continued and publiſh'd by *James Jurin*, M. D. Reg. Soc. Secr. in 32 Volumes.

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Bibliotheca Literaria, being a Collection of Inſcriptions, Medals, Diſſertations, *&c.* No. 10. to be continued, 1724.

A natural Hiſtory of *Engliſh* Inſects, illuſtrated with an hundred Copper Plates, curiouſly engraven from the Life; and (for thoſe who deſire it) exactly colour'd by the Author, *Eleazar Albin*, Painter. To which are added large Notes, and many curious Obſervations, by *W. Derham*, Fellow of the *Royal Society*, 1724.

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Eight Sermons preach'd at the Cathedral Church of St. *Paul's*, in Defence of the Divinity of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; upon the Encouragement given by the Lady *Moyer*, and at the Appointment of the Lord Biſhop of *London*, *&c.* By *Dan. Waterland*, D, D. Maſter of *Magdalen* College in *Cambridge*. The ſecond Edition, 1720.

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